PRICE $3.95

THE NEW YORKER

JULY 5, 2004

EXTON

[redacted]

ever noticed how truly rare objects force all the things around them to fade quietly away into the background

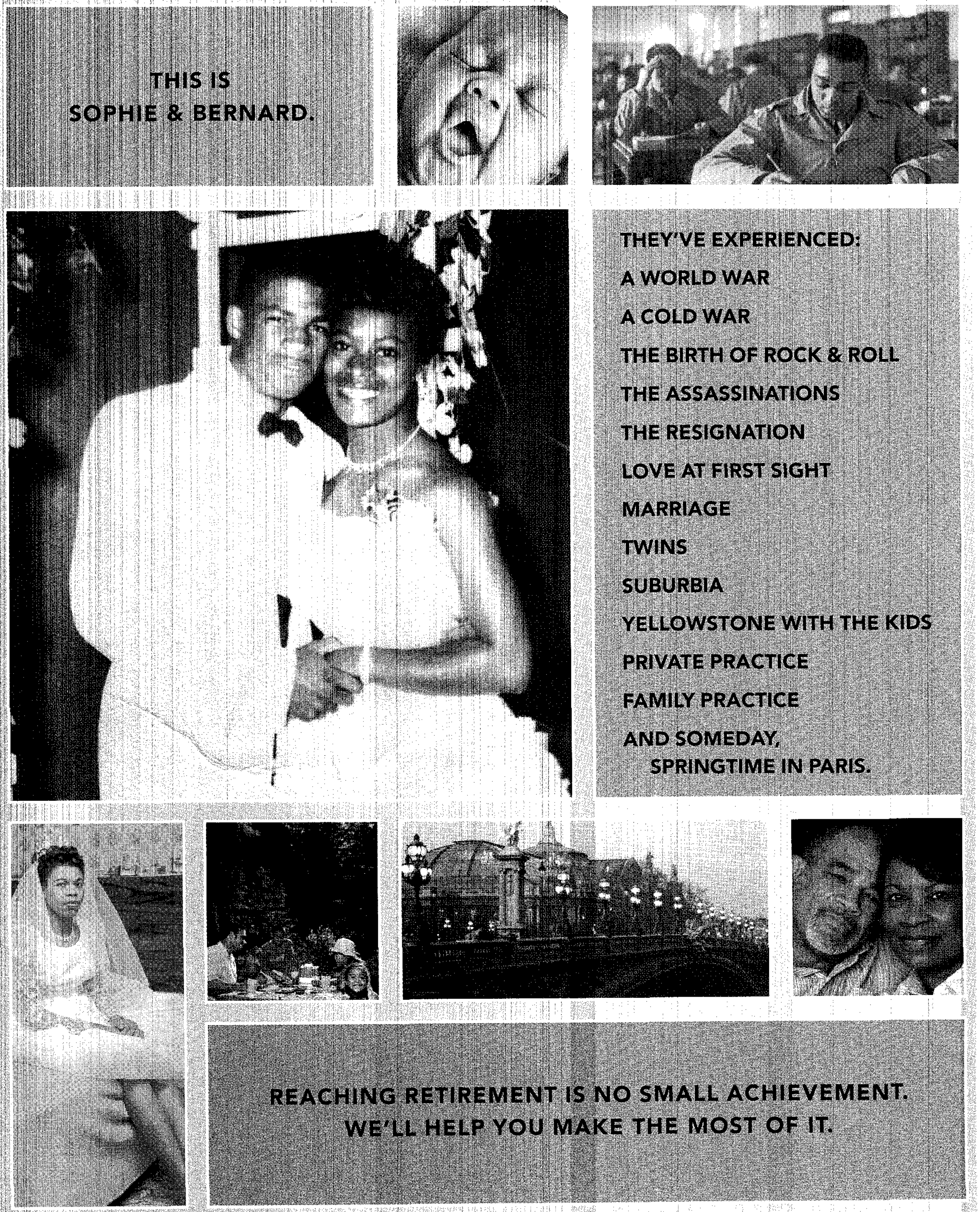
Always wear your seat belt, and please don't drink and drive. INFINITI, and INFINITI model names are Nissan trademarks. ©2004 INFINITI Division of Nissan North America, Inc.

Exhibit A.

The Infiniti FX. Styling you've never seen. Handling you'd never expect. Features you'd never imagine, like an available Intelligent Key, DVD entertainment and laser-assisted cruise control. Inside and out, it refuses to be ignored. More at Infiniti.com.

INFINITI®

INFINITI
FX45

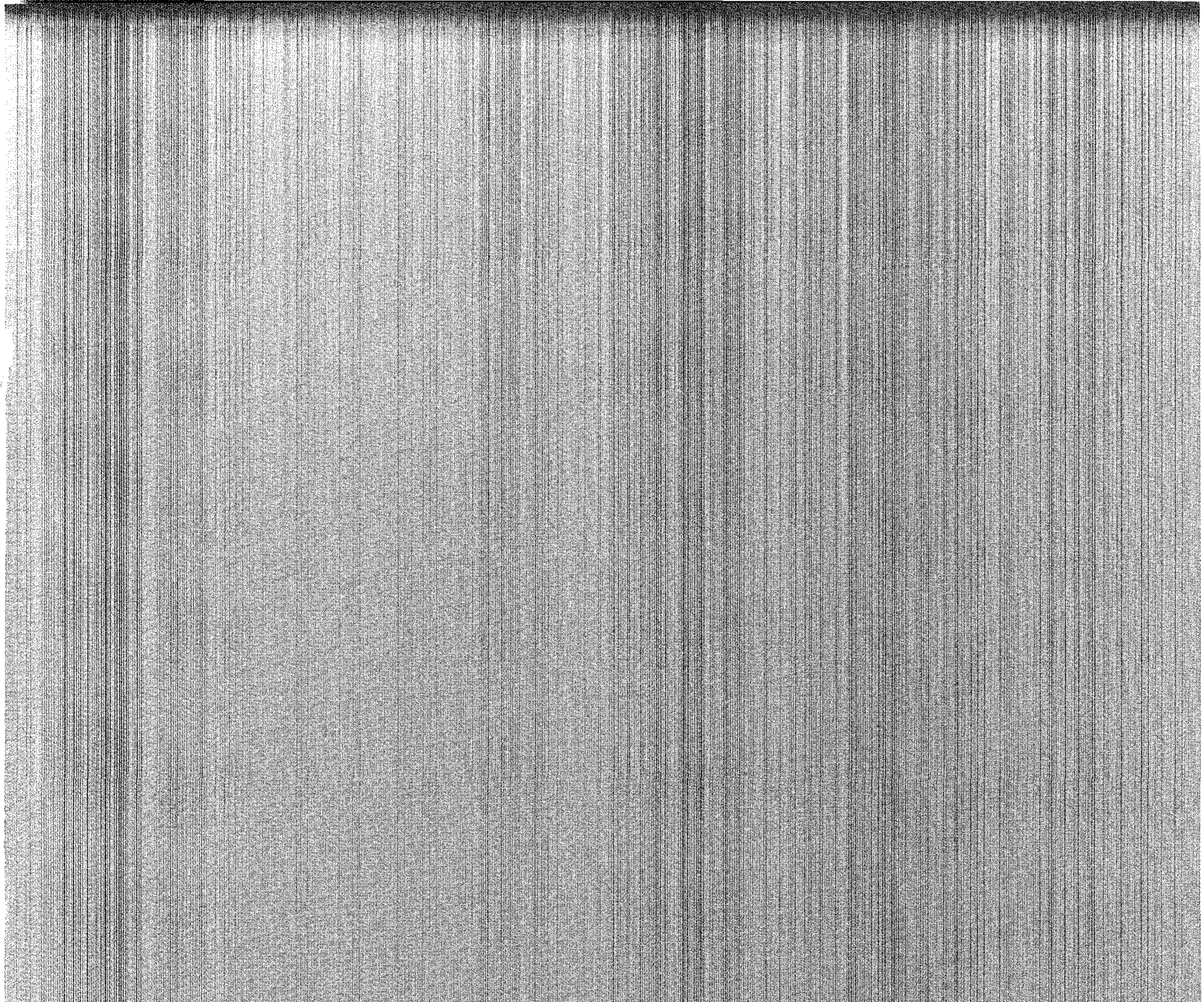


THIS IS
SOPHIE & BERNARD.

THEY'VE EXPERIENCED:
A WORLD WAR
A COLD WAR
THE BIRTH OF ROCK & ROLL
THE ASSASSINATIONS
THE RESIGNATION
LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT
MARRIAGE
TWINS
SUBURBIA
YELLOWSTONE WITH THE KIDS
PRIVATE PRACTICE
FAMILY PRACTICE
AND SOMEDAY,
SPRINGTIME IN PARIS.

REACHING RETIREMENT IS NO SMALL ACHIEVEMENT.
WE'LL HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OF IT.

Fidelity Portfolio Advisory Service℠ is a service of Strategic Advisers, Inc., a registered investment advisor and Fidelity Investments company, a
offers a carefully selected model portfolio of mutual funds. This service provides discretionary money management for a fee.
Fidelity Investments Institutional Services Company, Inc., 82 Devonshire Street, Boston, MA 02109
Fidelity Brokerage Services, Member NYSE, SIPC
3752



Introducing
FIDELITY RETIREMENT INCOME ADVANTAGE℠

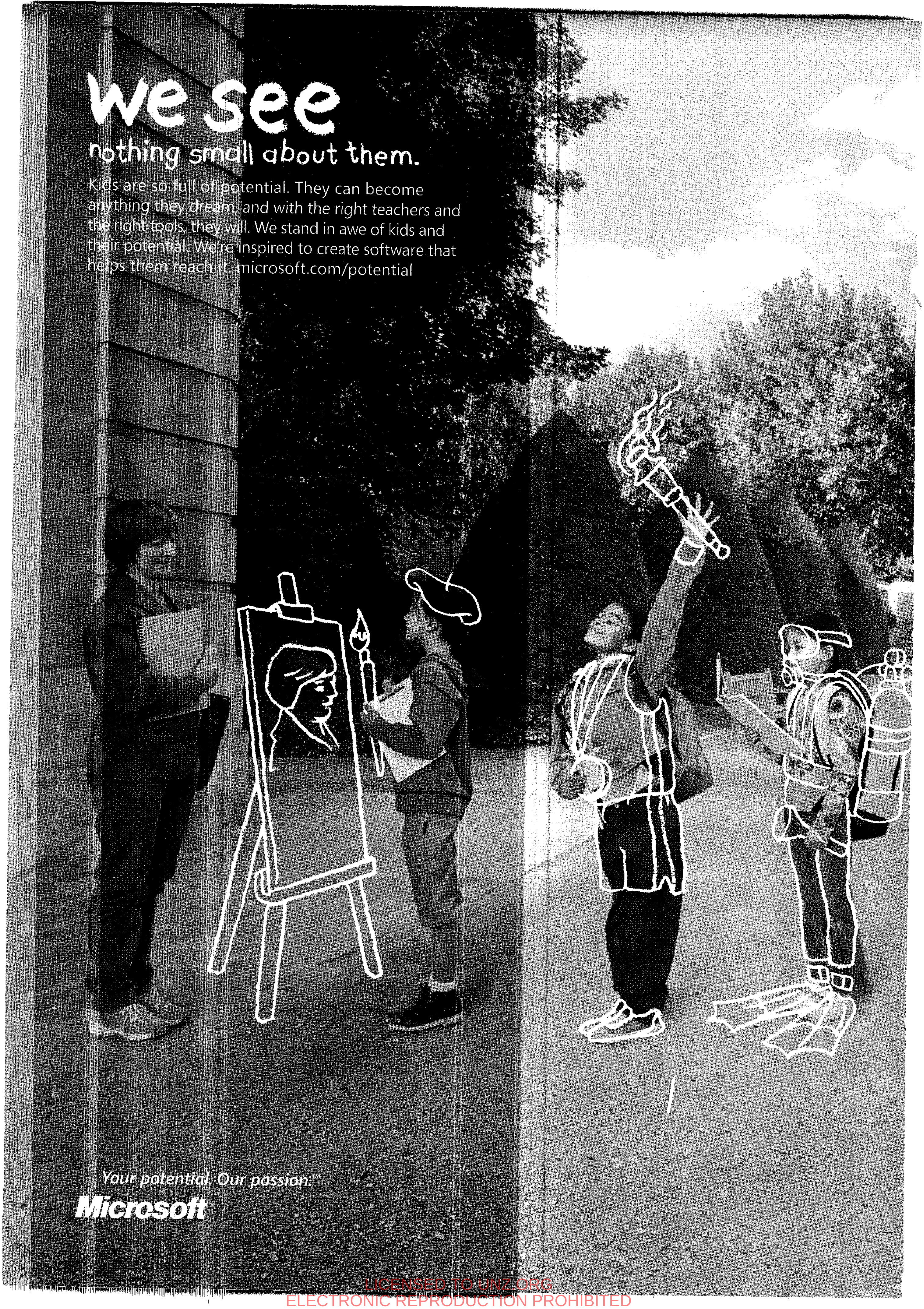
Fidelity
etirement Income
Advantage℠

PLANNING
INVESTING
INCOME MANAGEMENT

Like Sophie and Bernard, you may have accomplished your goals and reached retirement, but that doesn't mean you should stop making money. Now's the time to stay ahead of your expenses by investing strategically. fact, one of the biggest risks you may face is being too conservative in your investment strategy. e can help you develop an asset allocation plan that provides a balance of growth and income even manage a portfolio for you through Fidelity Portfolio Advisory Service℠. To see how Fidelity n help you manage your retirement assets, call for a free retirement income planning consultation.

ALL TODAY 1.800.FIDELITY • Fidelity.com/plan

Fidelity
INVESTMENTS®

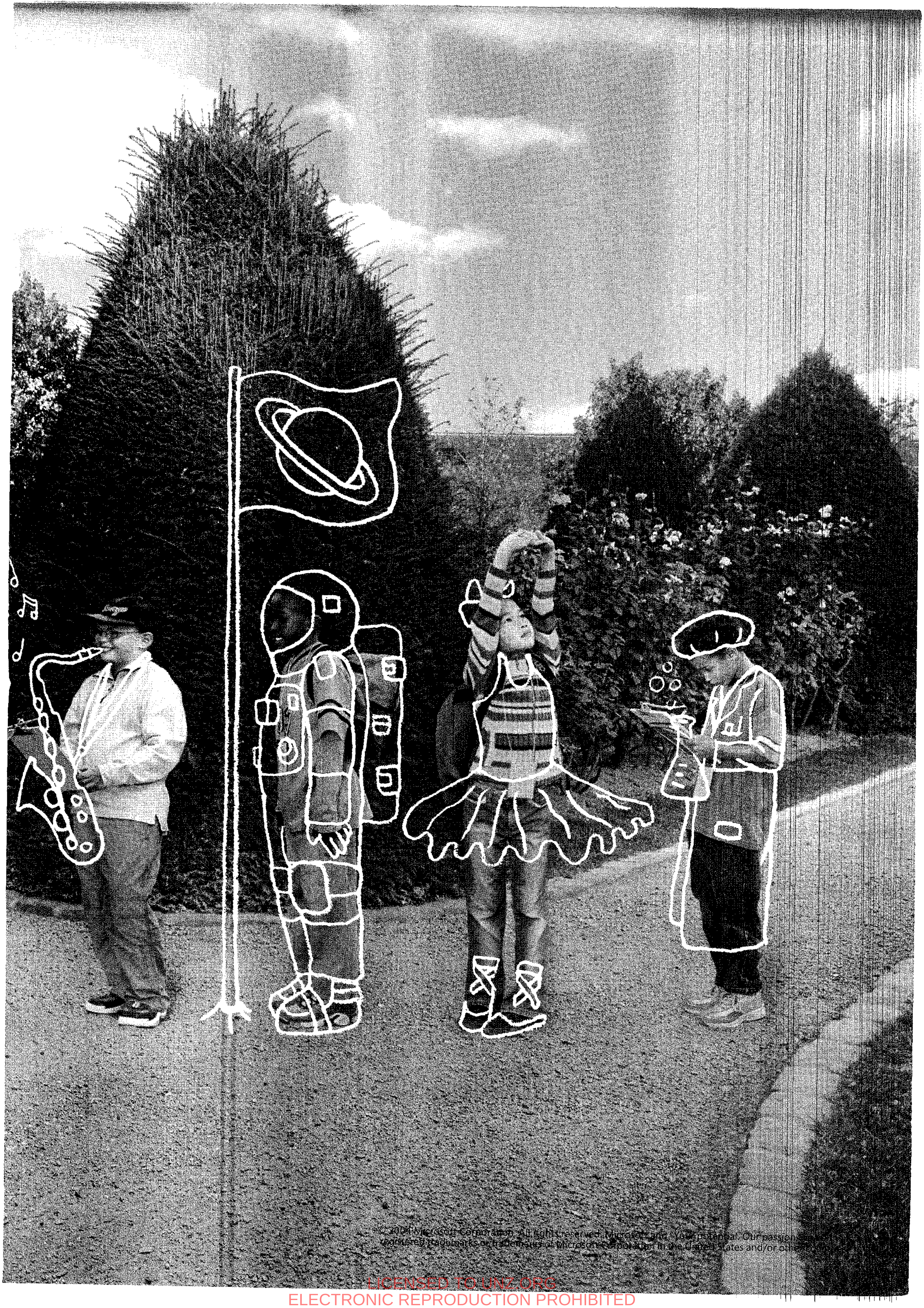


we see
nothing small about them.

Kids are so full of potential. They can become anything they dream, and with the right teachers and the right tools, they will. We stand in awe of kids and their potential. We're inspired to create software that helps them reach it. microsoft.com/potential

Your potential. Our passion.™

Microsoft



© 2004 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft and "Your potential. Our passion.
registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other

A special publishing event!

Nobel Prize Winner Toni Morrison's bestselling novels now in beautiful new paperback editions with deeply personal forewords reflecting on each work

Beloved
Jazz
Song of Solomon
Sula
Tar Baby

"A literary artist of the first rank.... She addresses us with the lustre of poetry."
—The Swedish Academy upon awarding the Nobel Prize in Literature

"Morrison is not just an important contemporary novelist but a major figure in our national literature."
—*The New York Review of Books*

VINTAGE 50 YEARS BOOKS

Find reading group guides, read excerpts and more at www.readinggroupcenter.com

Author photograph © Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

THE NEW YORKER

JULY 5, 2004

12 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
29 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Out of the occupation; remember Westway?

Caitlin Flanagan 38 DOMESTIC LIFE
To Hell with All That
A mother decides to go to work.
Paul Simms 47 SHOUTS & MURMURS
A Prayer
Nir Rosen 48 LETTER FROM FALLUJA
Home Rule
A report from behind opposition lines.
Katherine Boo 54 LETTER FROM INDIA
The Best Job in Town
What an American firm is offering.
Cynthia Gorney 70 THE SPORTING SCENE
A Feel for the Water
A swimmer changes a notion of athletics.
John Updike 80 FICTION
"Elsie by Starlight"

THE CRITICS
BOOKS
Adam Kirsch 88 *Andrew Lycett's "Dylan Thomas."*
93 Briefly Noted
Thomas Mallon 94 *Jerry Stahl's "I, Fatty."*
Joan Acocella 96 DANCING
The Balanchine centennial.
David Denby 99 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Before Sunset," "The Terminal."

POEMS
Henri Cole 41 "Poppies"
W. S. Merwin 61 "To the Moss"

COVER *"Declaration of Independence," by Christoph Niemann* THE BACK PAGE *"Noise Pollution & Din Control," by Arnold Roth* DRAWINGS *P. C. Vey, Eric Lewis, Drew Dernavich, Michael Maslin, William Hamilton, Barbara Smaller, Mike Twohy, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Frank Cotham, William Haefeli, Michael Crawford, Danny Shanahan, Tom Cheney, David Sipress, Jack Ziegler, Roz Chast, Leo Cullum, Charles Barsotti, Mick Stevens, Harry Bliss*

www.newyorker.com

It stays connected all over the world so you can, too.

THE BEST INTERNATIONAL WIRELESS CARRIER JUST GOT BETTER.

Now you can use your AT&T Wireless phone to travel the world and still stay close to those who matter most – all with your same wireless phone and number. Whether you call back home or others call you, you'll stay connected from over 140 countries worldwide. Find out how to take advantage of our lowest summer roaming rates ever from select European countries. To sign up, visit a store or call today.

USE YOUR SAME PHONE AND NUMBER OVERSEAS.

SIGN UP FOR GSM™ AMERICA NATIONAL FROM AT&T WIRELESS.

Get unlimited night & weekend minutes, unlimited mobile-to-mobile minutes and no nationwide long distance or roaming charges. $39.99/MO.

All with AT&T Wireless GSM America National from your applicable Service Area with a 2-year agreement. See below for activation fee and other monthly charges.

AT&T Wireless

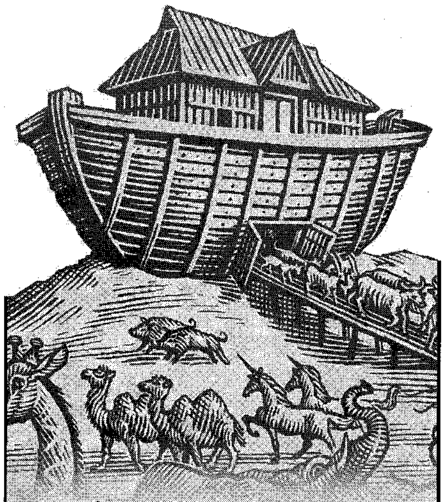
CALL 1 800 735 8542 **CLICK** attwireless.com/international **VISIT** any AT&T Wireless store

Important Information

An additional monthly **$1.75** Regulatory Programs Fee applies to help fund our compliance with various government mandated programs which may not yet be available in your area. This is not a tax or government required charge.

Requires qualified plan of $39.99 or above, credit approval, 2-year agreement, compatible GSM 850 MHz device and $36 activation and $175 cancellation fees. Not available for purchase or use in all areas. Usage is rounded up to the next full minute. Availability and reliability of service are subject to transmission limitations. Different rates apply outside each applicable Service Area. Airtime, roaming, additional minute, and long distance charges apply. Various taxes, surcharges, fees and other assessments (e.g., universal connectivity charge) apply. Limited time offer. Other restrictions apply. Subject to Service Agreement and printed materials. **Network and Coverage:** Our network includes areas we own and areas owned by other carriers. Some features work only on the network we own. Coverage is double the national GSM area than was available last year; applies to availability of service, not rates. **Unlimited Mobile-to-Mobile Minutes:** Applies to calls placed to or received from another AT&T Wireless subscriber when both are on our owned domestic network. **Night and Weekend Minutes:** 9 p.m.–5:59 a.m. M–F; and F 9 p.m.–M 5:59 a.m. **International Roaming:** Geographic limitations, special credit and billing requirements, and other terms, charges, taxes and restrictions apply. Requires compatible device and qualified domestic plan. Discounted International Roaming available only with a qualified domestic GSM™/GPRS rate plan. International calling rates apply only when using the AT&T Wireless network. Airtime or roaming charges are in addition to long distance charges. Calling to certain countries is blocked, which may change without notice. You may be charged a per-minute surcharge for certain international calls from the U.S. to wireless devices. Only one rate for the call will appear on your invoice. Before traveling with your device, be sure to check the frequency of both your device and the international network where you are traveling to confirm compatibility. Availability of wireless features varies by country. Incoming and outgoing call charges may apply to calls forwarded to the AT&T Wireless voice mail system even if no message is left. Available countries, rates and surcharges are subject to change. See attwireless.com/international for updated countries, rates and additional information about wireless surcharges. Comparison of lowest rates is based on publicly available information as of December 2003 regarding direct-dial wireless and landline carriers, and does not include carriers providing service via the Internet. **Summer Offer:** Special pricing available 6/1/04–9/30/04. Prices will increase to standard Discounted International Roaming rates after 9/30/04. See website for rates. The GSM letter mark is a trademark of the GSM Association. ©2004 AT&T Wireless. All Rights Reserved.

ARRIVE SAFELY



When God spoke, Noe listened. His family, though, needed a little more convincing.

THE PRESERVATIONIST

a novel

DAVID MAINE

"An enormous juggling act of families, animals, and faith... **Intelligent, energetic, irreverent, and worshipful.**"
—**Ann Patchett**, author of *Bel Canto*

"The magnificent, the awful, the wonderful, the weird, the big. ***The Preservationist* was great.**" —**Carolyn Chute**, author of *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*

"A funny, convincing amplification of the Biblical story...**I loved *The Preservationist*.**"
—**Tracy Chevalier**, author of *The Virgin Blue*

Available Wherever Books are Sold
St. Martin's Press
www.stmartins.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Katherine Boo ("The Best Job in Town," p. 54) is a staff writer and a fellow at the New America Foundation. Last month, she received a National Magazine Award for feature writing for her piece "The Marriage Cure."

William Finnegan (The Talk of the Town, p. 32) is the author of "A Complicated War" and "Cold New World."

Caitlin Flanagan ("To Hell with All That," p. 38), a staff writer, is working on a book about modern motherhood.

George Packer (Comment, p. 29) received two Overseas Press Club awards this year, for "War After the War," about Iraq, and "The Children of Freetown," about the legacy of the war in Sierra Leone.

Henri Cole (Poem, p. 41) has a new collection of poems, "Middle Earth," which is out in paperback.

Christoph Niemann (Cover) is an illustrator and designer.

Nir Rosen ("Home Rule," p. 48) is a freelance writer based in New York.

Cynthia Gorney ("A Feel for the Water," p. 70) is on the faculty of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of "Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars."

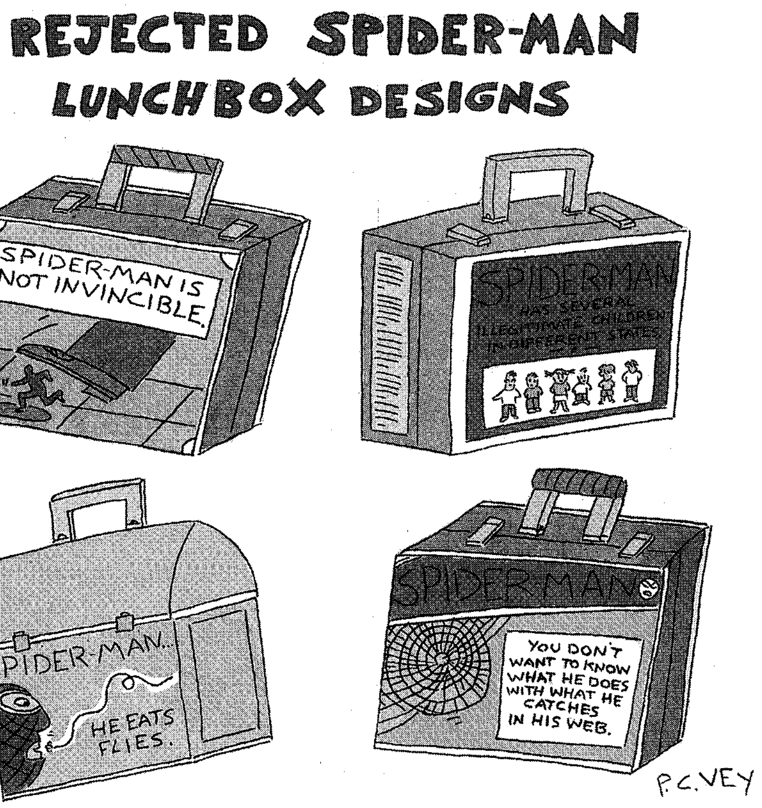
Paul Simms (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 47) is the creator of "NewsRadio." He writes for magazines and television.

John Updike (Fiction, p. 80) published a collection of his short fiction, "The Early Stories: 1953-1975," last October.

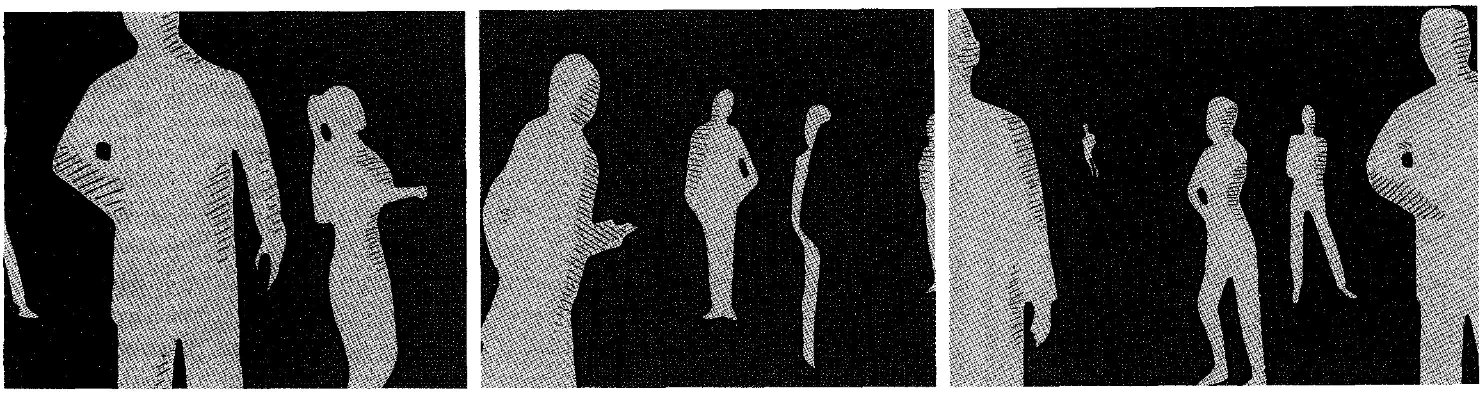
Adam Kirsch (Books, p. 88), the author of "The Thousand Wells: Poems," is the book critic of the New York *Sun*.

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 96) is a staff writer and the magazine's dance critic.

Arnold Roth (The Back Page, p. 102) is a cartoonist and has been a contributor since 1992. ♦


REJECTED SPIDER-MAN LUNCHBOX DESIGNS
SPIDER-MAN IS NOT INVINCIBLE.
SPIDER-MAN HAS SEVERAL ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT STATES
SPIDER-MAN... HE EATS FLIES.
SPIDER-MAN
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT HE DOES WITH WHAT HE CATCHES IN HIS WEB.
P.C. VEY

NOVARTIS



Nearly half the people taking medicine for their high blood pressure still have numbers that are too high.

New medical guidelines state that less than 120/80 is a normal blood pressure for most adults, and that high blood pressure medicine is recommended for numbers at or above 140/90. But millions of people, even those taking prescription medicine, still can't get their numbers down enough.

The *Take Action for Healthy BP* program from Novartis can help. It lets you work with your doctor to set and reach your BP goal. Guaranteed, or your money back on selected Novartis prescription costs.

Ask your doctor for a Healthy BP Pack from Novartis today. Get with the program and get your numbers down.

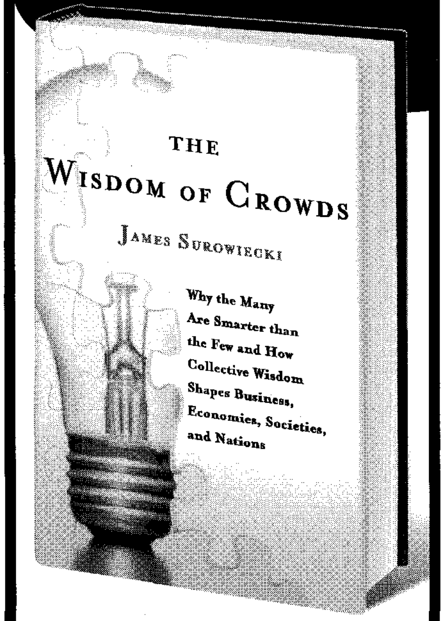
Take Action for Healthy BP

For more information, details and limitations, call 1-888-BPHELP3 or visit www.HealthyBPhelp.com.

©2004 Novartis C-CVZ-1012

James Surowiecki

"has produced something surprising and new: a sociological tract as gripping as a good novel."*


THE
WISDOM OF CROWDS
JAMES SUROWIECKI
Why the Many Are Smarter than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations

"America's most brilliant business writer thinks we should trust elites less and our own collective intelligence more."
—JACOB WEISBERG, editor of *Slate*

"Fascinating."
—*Time* magazine

"A big-idea book, reminiscent of his *New Yorker* colleague Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point.*" —Salon.com

"Terrific... bursting with vivid examples."
—*Business 2.0*

"A singular book... with dozens of illuminating anecdotes and case studies."
—*Entertainment Weekly*

Doubleday

Available wherever books are sold • Also available on cassette and CD from Random House Audio • www.wisdomofcrowds.com

**Best Life Magazine*

THE MAIL

CHALABI AND THE TRUTH

Reading Jane Mayer's piece on Ahmad Chalabi, the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, was like having someone explain how all the tricks in a magic show were done, many days after the performance ("The Manipulator," June 7th). In this case, however, the tricks were news stories about mobile labs producing chemical and biological weapons, the nuclear capability that Saddam Hussein was supposedly on the verge of acquiring, terrorist training camps, the concept of creating democracy in the wider Middle East by establishing it in Iraq, and on and on—all the stories we were told as an invasion of Iraq was made to seem so urgent after the September 11th attacks.
Jeanne Kelly
Rockville, Md.

Calling Chalabi a "manipulator" should not, in any way, absolve the White House of its role in the Iraq deception. The Bush Administration was not simply scammed because it wanted to be scammed; it was an active and equal partner in the charade. Its members, and especially the Pentagon's civilian leadership, bypassed the usual vetting process of the intelligence community, ushered in Chalabi and his defectors, and sold their dubious claims to the American public. They ordered him up and he delivered (and was paid handsomely). The blame for this fiasco rests squarely on the shoulders of President Bush, and it is time he was held accountable.
Alison Regan
Santa Monica, Calif.

Mayer's portrait of Chalabi as someone who sold a fraudulent bill of goods to willing American ears is on target. But his information was only one part of a mosaic of reasons for war that included the Bush-Cheney team's interest in Iraqi oil, its plans to establish permanent American military bases in Iraq, and a neoconservative ideological agenda. Chalabi provided rationales for the invasion—Iraq as a threat bristling with weapons of mass destruction—and the Bush team ran with it. The rest of us will be picking up the pieces for years to come.
Howard Kaplan
Belmont, Mass.

KESEY'S MOMENT

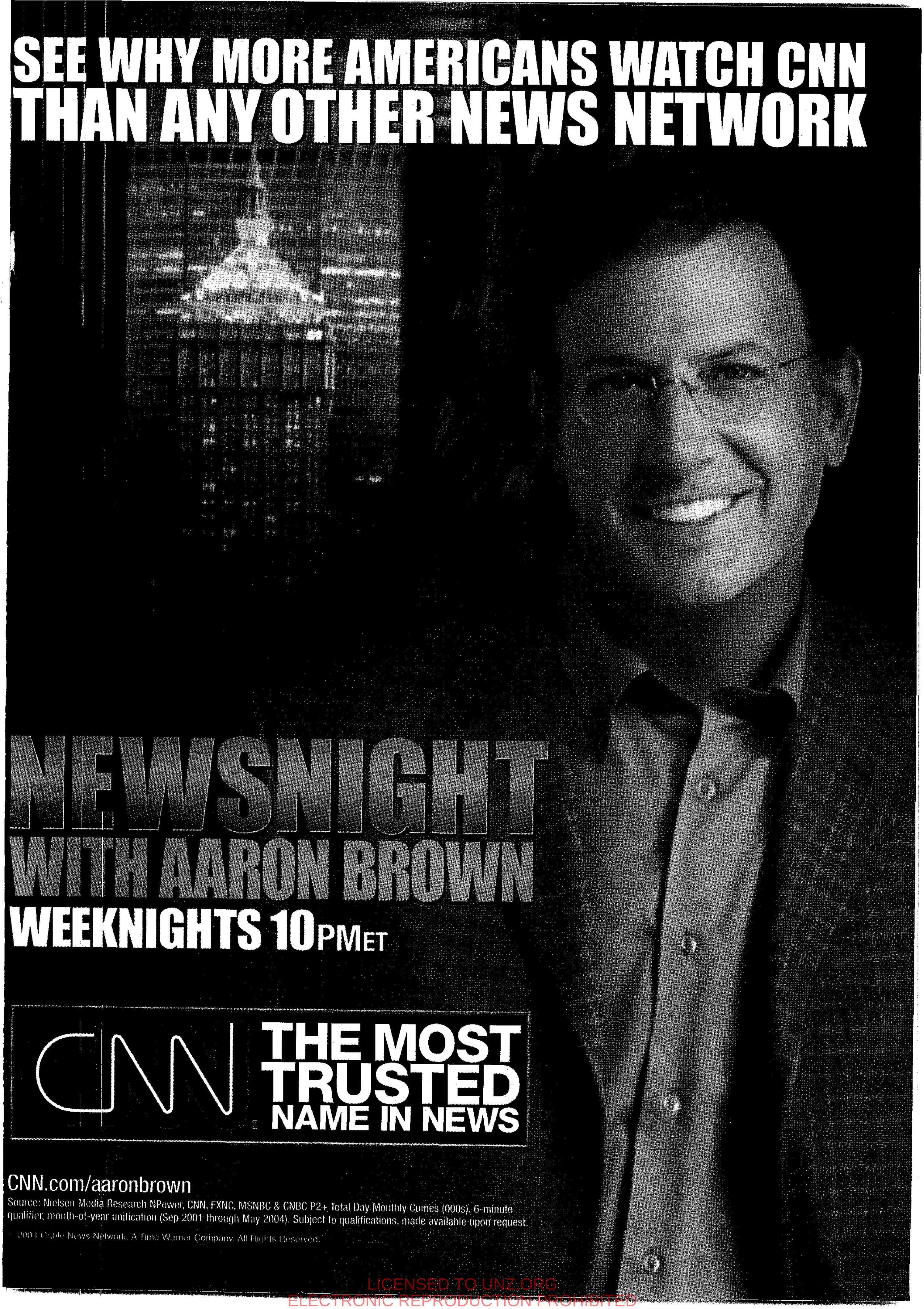
Robert Stone, in his evocative piece on Ken Kesey, the author of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," and the culture of the nineteen-sixties, writes, "If he had chosen to work through his progressively revealed mythology in novels, rather than trying to live it out all at once, he might have become a writer for the age" ("The Prince of Possibility," June 14th & 21st). For Kesey, however, art didn't imitate life; art was life, albeit bolstered by LSD, which, perhaps, didn't allow him to distinguish between the two. Kesey wasn't the type of writer who could let ideas incubate and then stylize them: he could only become the idea, and only for a while.
Carl Keane
Mill Valley, Calif.

THE SUN-BURNED MIND

Joan Acocella describes Coleridge as one of the first recorded cases of writer's block, a condition that she suggests came into its own in the Romantic period ("Blocked," June 14th & 21st). But, as early as 1591, Sir Philip Sidney, in the first sonnet of "Astrophel and Stella," describes how a poet can become paralyzed. He even reads other writers to see if they might shed "Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sun-burnd brain."
Jacob Korg
Professor Emeritus of English
University of Washington
Seattle, Wash.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.



SEE WHY MORE AMERICANS WATCH CNN THAN ANY OTHER NEWS NETWORK

NEWSNIGHT WITH AARON BROWN

WEEKNIGHTS 10PM ET

CNN THE MOST TRUSTED NAME IN NEWS

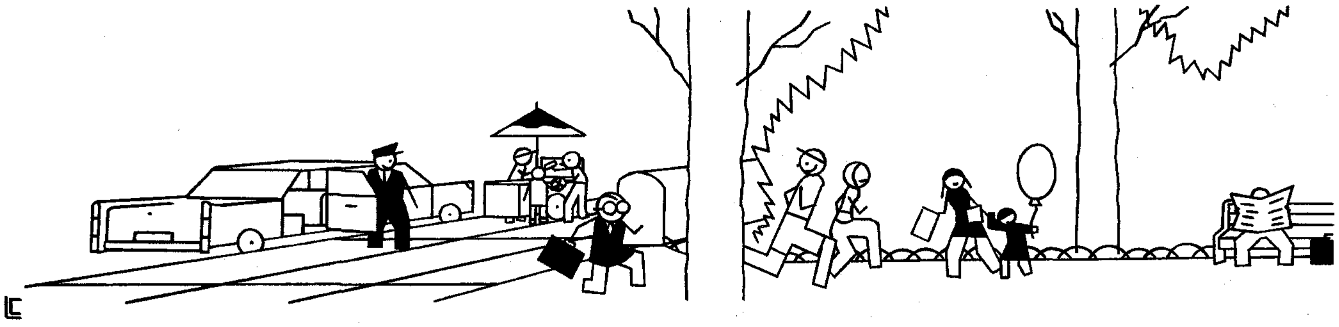
CNN.com/aaronbrown

Source: Nielsen Media Research NPower, CNN, FXNC, MSNBC & CNBC P2+ Total Day Monthly Cumes (000s). 6-minute qualifier, month-of-year unification (Sep 2001 through May 2004). Subject to qualifications, made available upon request.

© 2004 Cable News Network. A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
4	5	6	30	1	2	3

For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

THE BALLET OF BRITAIN

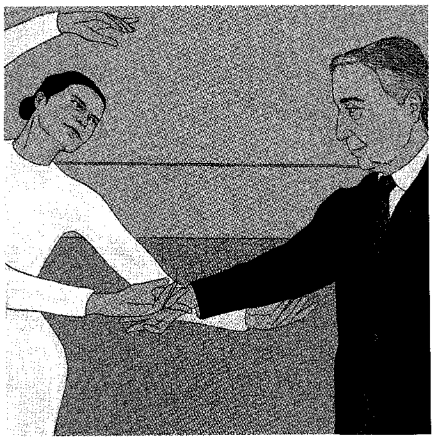
England's greatest ballet-maker, the late Frederick Ashton, was a lyrical, well-mannered, sweet classicist. The Lincoln Center Festival's two-week celebration of the centenary of his birth starts with samplers of repertory works, many of them rarely seen, performed by the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, and Japan's K-Ballet Company (in its U.S. début). The Edwardian "Enigma Variations" (1968) and "Rhapsody" (1980), with its virtuosic male lead made for Baryshnikov, haven't been danced in New York for two decades, and the uncharacteristically harsh "Dante Sonata" (1940) hasn't been seen here since 1950. London's Royal Ballet takes over in the second week, performing "Cinderella" and other classics. (July 6-17; see Dance.)

WHAT FALLS WILL RISE

Ana Mendieta's career as an artist has long been overshadowed by the circumstances of her premature death, at age thirty-six, in 1985: her husband, the minimalist sculptor Carl Andre, was tried and acquitted on charges that he pushed her out a window. "Ana Mendieta: Earth Body Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985," at the Whitney, shifts the focus to her accomplishments and her influence, both of which were sizable. The show includes more than a hundred pieces, including her "Siluetas" series, in which she pressed her naked body into sand, clay, flower beds, and the like, then allowed the tide or rain or weeds to obliterate her form. (Opens July 1; see Art.)

Y TU CINE TAMBIÉN

A three-week retrospective of Mexican films includes Emilio Fernández's melodrama "A Woman in Love" (1946) and Paul Leduc's "Frida" (1984), a bio-pic that preceded Salma Hayek's star turn by two decades. The centerpiece is a new print of Luis Buñuel's "Los Olvidados" (1950), still the most ruthless juvenile-delinquency movie ever made. (Film Forum, starts July 2; see Movies.)



A tribute to the British ballet-maker Frederick Ashton, at Lincoln Center.

MARIA
FELIX
en
Enamorada
HECHO
EN
MEXICO

Melodramas, bio-pics, and other classic Mexican cinema, at Film Forum.

LARA TOMLIN

The sculpture and performance of Ana Mendieta, at the Whitney.

The fondue set you want. 19.99
The 24-ct. pencils you need. .99
EXPECT MORE. PAY LESS.®

©2004 Target Stores. The Bullseye Design is a registered trademark of Target Brands, Inc. All rights reserved.

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AFTER THE FALL
Peter Krause and Carla Gugino star in a Roundabout Theatre Company revival of the Arthur Miller play. Directed by Michael Mayer. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

FICTION
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new play by Steven Dietz, in which a married couple suffer the consequences of reading each other's journals. With Emily Bergl, Tom Irwin, and Julie White. Directed by David Warren. In previews. (Roundabout, Laura Pels Theatre, 111 W. 6th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE FROGS
Lincoln Center Theatre inaugurates its twentieth season with an expanded production of Stephen Sondheim and Burt Shevelove's musical from 1974, based on the Aristophanes comedy. There's a new book by Nathan Lane, who plays the lead, Dionysos, and six new songs by Sondheim. Directed and choreographed by Susan Stroman, with sets by Giles Cadle and costumes by William Ivey Long. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER TULIP
Lois Nettleton stars in a new comedy written and directed by Mark Giesser, inspired by Alexandre Dumas's novel "The Black Tulip," about rival breeders trying to produce a new variety of flower. With sets by John C. Scheffler. Opens June 30 at 8. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING
Aquila Theatre Company presents a staged version of the Rudyard Kipling story, in a new adaptation by Peter Meineck, starring Louis Butelli, Richard Willis, and Anthony Cochrane. Directed by Robert Richmond. Previews begin July 1. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
The Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park summer series begins. The players include Kristen Johnston, Dominic Chianese, Jimmy Smits, and Sam Waterston. Directed by David Esbjornson. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

TOUCH THE NAMES
Randal Myler ("Love, Janis") directs a play made up of dramatized actual letters left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by friends and family of the fallen soldiers. Marylouise Burke, Carolyn McCormick, and Zabryna Guevara lead the cast. Previews begin July 1. Opens July 4 at 2. (Abingdon Theatre Complex, 312 W. 36th St. 212-946-1042.)

WAR AND PEACE
Russia's Theatre-Atelier Piotr Fomenko, directed by Piotr Fomenko, makes its North American début at the Lincoln Center Festival with a three-act adaptation of Tolstoy's novel. July 6-7 at 7. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)

WRESTLING PORCELAIN
Richard Foreman's Ontological Theatre at St. Mark's In-the-Bowery hosts the Wreckio Ensemble's show about a lonely Cuban bathroom attendant in a trendy New York restaurant (Dechelle Damien) and the women who walk past her on a typical evening. Directed by Tamera Cone. Previews begin July 1. Opens July 6 at 8. (Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-352-3101.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ADDRESS UNKNOWN
An epistolary play based on the late-nineteen-thirties novel by Kathrine Kressmann Taylor that explores the friendship between a German Jewish art collector in San Francisco, Max Eisenstein (Jim Dale), and his business partner, Martin Schulse (William Atherton), who has returned to Germany. The play is well crafted, but the stiff staging constrains the performances; Max and Martin narrate their letters from opposite ends of a broad, oblong table, which is meant to indicate the ocean and the emotional gulf between them but also weakens their connection. Frank Dunlop directs. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

BIO
MICHIGAN

Sufjan Stevens performs at the South Street Seaport on July 1.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

AFTERBIRTH: KATHY AND MO'S GREATEST HITS
The actor-writers Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney appear together on the New York stage for the first time in fifteen years, in a production directed by Mark Brokaw. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

ASSASSINS
The Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical about nine marginalized souls who each took aim at an American President is well sung, gorgeous to look at, and meticulous in its detail. But it has been freighted with more weight than it can properly carry. This dark cartoon—a kind of glib carnival of carnage—was first performed in 1991, at the beginning of the Gulf War, and was meant to have its Broadway début just after September 11, 2001. The delay of more than two years has not helped the show's karma or its message. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/3/04.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

BOISE
David Folwell's well-observed new play begins with sitcom pacing but quickly becomes subtle. Stewart (Christopher Burns), bored with his job and his marriage, spends his workdays playing games on the Internet and his evenings escaping into TV adventure programs. Then a desirable staffer named Tara (Lucia Brawley) appears at his desk with a standard-issue corporate birthday cake and a store of Bertrand Russell quotes. Stewart's desire causes him to snap, and he becomes dangerous in very believable ways. With strong performances by Tasha Lawrence as Stewart's loyal, damaged sister and by Matt Pepper, in four different roles. Rob Bundy directs. (Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl., west of Seventh Ave. 212-868-4444.)

BUG
As written by Tracy Letts and directed by Dexter Bullard, this play is never exactly what it seems. It begins deceptively simply, in a residential hotel somewhere near Oklahoma City, in a town God may or may not have forsaken. Agnes White (the incomparable Shannon Cochran), who works as a bartender, stands at the door to her small, dingy room. Before long, a friend shows up with a little distraction—a guy named Peter Evans (Michael Shannon), who seems to want to hang out. Scenes of casual surrealism culminate, in the second half of the play, in acts of physical and emotional violence that do more than shock: they arouse both pity and despair. Cochran and Shannon give not only two of the most nuanced performances you'll ever see but two of the greatest. (5/17/04) (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

CIRQUE JACQUELINE
Andrea Reese returns to the Triad with her one-woman show about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Directed by Charles Messina. Thursdays only. Through July 22. (158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101.)

FABULATION
A dark comedy by Lynn Nottage ("Intimate Apparel") follows the downward slide of a pregnant former publicist into the world of welfare mothers and crack dens. Directed by Kate Whoriskey. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through July 11.)

FROZEN
Bryony Lavery's play about a grieving woman whose daughter was killed by a pedophile has moved to Broadway. Starring Swoosie Kurtz and Brían F. O'Byrne and directed by Doug Hughes. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

MISS JULIE
Scott Schwartz ("Golda's Balcony") directs a contemporary adaptation of Strindberg's drama, in a new translation by Truda Stockenström. With scenic design by Beowulf Boritt. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

MONSTER
Dylan Moran is a rueful and rumpled young Irish comic with a punch so quick and deft that you feel the sting without being sure anything hit you. Don't realize your potential, he warns the audience during his ninety-minute show: "It's like your bank balance; you always have a lot less than you think. Don't look at it. It's like a locked door within yourself. Leave it that way." You can tell he doesn't mean it . . . maybe. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. Through July 17.)

THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS—THE MUSICAL!
An affectionate satire of Broadway musicals by Eric Rockwell (music) and Joanne Bogart (lyrics) shreds the conventions of the form in five swiftly paced vignettes, each about a woman who can't pay the rent. Rockwell and Bogart, performing with Lovette George and Craig Fols, parody the theatrical stylings of Rodgers & Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Kander & Ebb. In the Sondheim bit, "A Little Complex," set in a New York apartment building called the Woods, double-entendres run wild. In the Webber section,

George, playing a cash-challenged diva, belts the ballad "I've Heard That Song Before." Pamela Hunt directs. (York Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE MYSTERY PLAYS
Second Stage Theatre kicks off its summer series uptown at the McGinn/Cazale with a new drama by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, a co-production with the Yale Repertory Theatre. Directed by Connie Grappo. (Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

RUSH'S DREAM
In the hotly contested Presidential election of 1800, the candidates, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, traded harsh words, to the detriment of their friendship. Many years later, a mutual friend, Benjamin Rush, urged them to reconcile. A thoughtful play by the Democratic media consultant Julian Mulvey, drawn almost entirely from letters exchanged between Adams and Jefferson, re-creates the rapprochement. What the play lacks in dramatic urgency is made up for by the interest afforded by watching an intellectual courtship between powerful minds. With Richard Mawe as Adams, Baz Snider as Jefferson, and John Michalski as Rush. Directed by Alexandra Farkas. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

SIGHT UNSEEN
In a revival of Donald Margulies's subtle 1992 play at the Manhattan Theatre Club's Biltmore Theatre, under the impeccable direction of Dan Sullivan, Jonathan Waxman (Ben Shenkman), a wunderkind of American modern art who is in England for a retrospective of his work, walks into a threadbare farmer's cottage in Norfolk to visit Patricia (Laura Linney), his former muse, and, in her words, "the sacrificial shiksa," whom he jilted fifteen years earlier. Shenkman and Linney play masterfully together; they make quicksilver shifts of mood sparkle with nervy implication. (6/7/04) (261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

ALSO PLAYING

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BOMBAY DREAMS
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.

THE BOY FROM OZ
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BRIDGE & TUNNEL
45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

JUMPERS
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-7171. Closes July 11.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE NORMAL HEART
Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The company's spring season closes with "Romeo and Juliet." For a full cast list, see www.abt.org. (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. June 28-29 and July 1-2 at 8 and June 30 and July 3 at 2 and 8.)

ASHTON CELEBRATION
Four companies—the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Japan's K-Ballet Company, and London's Royal Ballet—present a retrospective of the work of Frederick Ashton at the Lincoln Center Festival (see This Week). ♦ July 6 at 8: The Joffrey Ballet performs "Monotones I" and "Monotones II," the Birmingham Royal Ballet performs "Enigma Variations," and the K-Ballet Company performs "Rhapsody." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 17.)

"MARGOT FONTEYN IN AMERICA: A CELEBRATION"
An exhibition at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, curated by Robert Gottlieb and Joy Williams Brown, celebrates the ballerina's grace, glamour, and charm, with photographs, film footage, original costumes, and couture designs by Yves Saint Laurent. (Vincent Astor Gallery, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. For information, call 212-870-1630. Through July 3.)

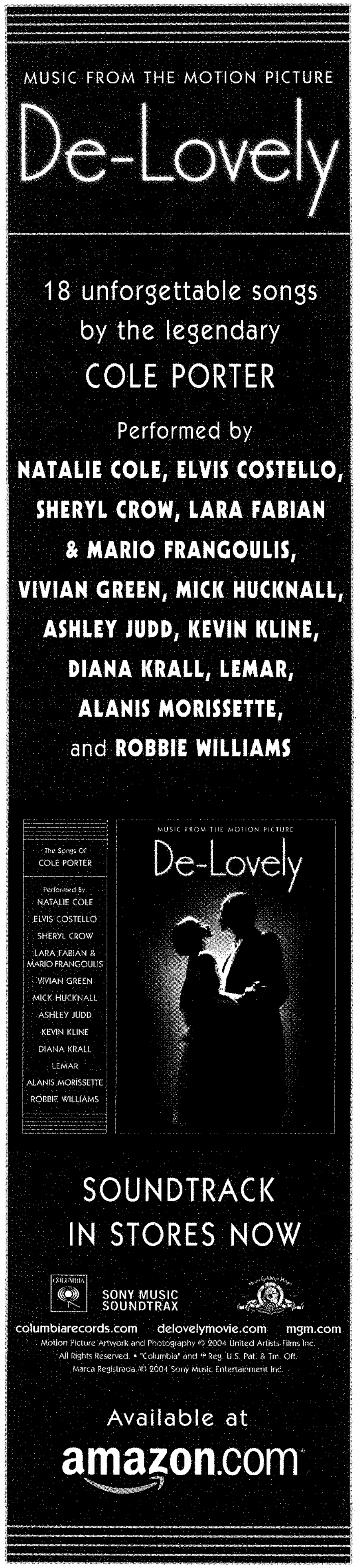
PILOBOLUS DANCE THEATRE
For the seventeenth summer in a row, the quirky acrobats from Connecticut set up camp at the Joyce for a month. Three rotating programs mix repertory works with one première per program. In "Megawatt," Jonathan Wolken amps up the troupe's high-impact gymnastics with music by Radiohead, Primus, and Squarepusher. "Night of the Dark Moon," an ensemble piece by Alison Chase, retells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice as a love triangle in which Death is the third player. And Michael Tracy presents the dreamy duet "Warm Heart," set to an ambient score by Aphex Twin. With the company's most acclaimed works, "Untitled" (1975) and "Day Two" (1980). (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 29-July 2 and July 5-6 at 8 and July 3 at 2 and 8. Through July 17.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL
Fifty years ago, Paul Taylor made his début at the Pillow, as a dancer with Pearl Lang, and he founded his own dance company. The appearances of Taylor's company at this year's festival commemorate both anniversaries, with selections that include the new remake of "Petrushka"—"Le Grand Puppetier"—and a recent masterpiece, "Promethean Fire." In the smaller Doris Duke Theatre, ZviDance, run by the earnest and ardent Israeli choreographer Zvi Gotheiner, makes its début at the Pillow with three works: "Three Duets to Brazilian-Indian Music," "Lapse," and "Easy for You to Say." ♦ Paul Taylor: June 30-July 2 at 8, July 3 at 2 and 8, and July 4 at 2. (Ted Shawn Theatre.) ZviDance: July 1-2 at 8:15, July 3 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 4 at 5. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING"
June 30: Merengue and *bachata* with Super Uba and El Bachatín. July 1: Swing and jump with Roomful of Blues. July 2: A night of samba, *pagode,* and *forró* courtesy of Grupo Saveiro. July 3: Classic soul and R. & B. with the Uptown Horns. July 6: The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. (Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center. All shows are at 7:30, with dance lessons at 6:30. For more information, call 212-875-5766. Through July 16.)



MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE
De-Lovely

18 unforgettable songs
by the legendary
COLE PORTER

Performed by
NATALIE COLE, ELVIS COSTELLO, SHERYL CROW, LARA FABIAN & MARIO FRANGOULIS, VIVIAN GREEN, MICK HUCKNALL, ASHLEY JUDD, KEVIN KLINE, DIANA KRALL, LEMAR, ALANIS MORISSETTE,
and **ROBBIE WILLIAMS**

SOUNDTRACK
IN STORES NOW

COLUMBIA SONY MUSIC SOUNDTRAX

columbiarecords.com delovelymovie.com mgm.com

Motion Picture Artwork and Photography © 2004 United Artists Films Inc. All Rights Reserved. • "Columbia" and ® Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Marca Registrada./© 2004 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

Available at
amazon.com

SUFJAN STEVENS
This ambitious young singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist has put out four albums over the past four years. His first solo release, "A Sun Came," had Celtic, Indian, Middle Eastern, and other influences. On his second record, "Enjoy Your Rabbit," he added electronic elements and structured the album around the signs of the Chinese zodiac. His third release, "Greetings from Michigan: The Great Lakes State," paid homage to his birthplace. He plans to follow up this album with a record for each of the fifty states. In the midst of that Herculean task, he recently released a stripped-down and moving record called "Seven Swans," which was recorded back in 2002. Stevens kicks off the long Fourth of July weekend with an outdoor show at the South Street Seaport. With the melancholy, elegantly arranged pop of the **Silent League.** (Pier 17. 212-732-7678. July 1 at 6.)

"CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE"
July 1 at 7: The Algerian-born Parisian singer Souad Massi and the Cape Verdean vocalist Maria De Barros. July 3 at 3: Skitch Henderson and the New York Pops. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

STING / ANNIE LENNOX
These two singers once lent credibility to the New Wave scene. With their edgier days behind them, they've become mainstays of adult-contemporary radio. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. July 1-2 at 7:30.)

"CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!"
July 1 at 7:30: A concert titled the "Unity Sessions" brings together T.N. AKA Tamer from DAM, a Palestinian m.c., and the Israeli hip-hop artists Mooke and Segol 59, along with local Middle Eastern musicians. July 3 at 7:30: A Latin-music triple bill with Bacilos, Cabas, and Radio Mundial. (Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

LYLE LOVETT
The wry, dapper Texan celebrates Independence Day. **Calexico,** with its moody, mysterious, and sometimes menacing Western rock, opens. (Battery Park. 212-835-2789, ext. 3. July 4 at 4.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—July 2: The sexy rapper **Lil' Kim.** July 5: **Cannibal Corpse,** as the name might suggest, is a death-metal ensemble. July 6: The tough and tender rocker **Pat Benatar.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 3: The British band **Psychic TV** reunite for the third time in their twenty-three-year history. Formed from the rubble of seventies industrial-music pioneers Throbbing Gristle, the group has gone through dozens of lineup and stylistic changes. Psychic TV's one constant has been their protean leader, Genesis P-Orridge (he recently got breast implants), whose main influences are the expatriate painter Brion Gysin and William Burroughs. This incarnation includes veterans of the local punk scene as well as Douglas Rushkoff, a journalist and "Frontline" correspondent, on keyboards. **Michael Gira,** the former Swans leader, opens with a solo set.

CORAL ROOM
512 W. 29th St. (212-244-1965)—July 1: The Italian disco innovator **Alexander Robotnick** makes his first United States appearance. Some twenty years ago, Robotnick had international dance-club hits with "Problèmes d'Amour" and "Les Grands Voyages de l'Amour." Lately, Miss Kitten and other eighties revivalists have been inspired by Robotnick's time-capsule synthesizers and New Wave beats. Last year, Miss Kitten put one of his old songs, "Dance Boy Dance," on a compilation, and Robotnick was back on the electronic scene.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 30: The Atlanta-based six-piece neo-soul outfit **Seek.** July 1: The singer-songwriter **Martha Wainwright.** July 5: **Fantcha,** a native of Cape Verde who now lives in Brooklyn, learned the intricacies of *morna,* the sweet, sad songs of her homeland, from Cesaria Evora. On her two albums available here, "Criolinha" and "Viva Mindelo," she spices up the earthy island blues with *coladeiras* (faster-paced *mornas*) and Afro-Brazilian touches such as samba rhythms.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—July 2: The **Dan Band,** the Los Angeles group that rocked the movie "Old School." July 6: The guitarist **Rich Robinson,** formerly of the Black Crowes. With **Mary Lee's Corvette.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—July 1: The **Paybacks** come from the same fertile garage-rock scene that spawned the White Stripes. They freshen up their rollicking guitars with elements of classic power pop along the lines of vintage Cheap Trick.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—July 1: The Colombian singer **Marta Gomez.** July 2: The Venezuelan guitarist **Aquiles Baez.**

SIN-É
150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077)—June 30: The voice of **Katell Keineg**—who was born in Wales, raised in Brittany, and currently lives in Dublin—is a beautiful and wild force of nature. After Keineg's two major-label releases (the last of which was 1997's "Jet"), her recorded output has been sparse: a pair of E.P.s. She recently completed "High July," a new full-length album, which has yet to be released here. July 3: The local boys in the **Star Spangles** play a brand of rough-hewn rock and roll that owes a huge debt to such early-seventies punk icons as the Ramones (with whom they've shared a producer). Their mission is far from original, but their popularity demonstrates that youthful nihilism and teen angst never go out of style.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—June 30: One of the most successful dance bands to emerge during the early years of Guinea's independence, **Bembeya Jazz** started reworking traditional rhythms with Western horns and guitars in 1961. Following the death of the band's creative director, Acoubacar Dembar Camara, in 1973, and Guinea's declining economic fortunes during the eighties, the group dissolved a little more than a decade ago. They reunited in 2002 under the leadership of the guitarist Sekou (Diamond Fingers) Diabaté.

TABLES FOR TWO

IXTA
48 E. 29th St. (212-683-4833)—A cause for celebration, at least for the residents of the no man's land between Koreatown and the South Asian restaurants of lower Lexington: an un-depressing restaurant has opened in the neighborhood. The new Mexican place has a tall potted palm outside, where ladies in orange plastic chairs drink margaritas; at sundown, even the gritty sidewalk glows. The atmosphere inside is a bit more self-conscious, with two panels of the wall given over to installations of votive candles and bouquets of gerbera daisies and a motif of dizzying circular drawings. (Not Mayan, if anyone was wondering—just overdesigned.)

A Mexican dinner pretty much has to start with a bowl of guacamole. At Ixta, the stuff is chunky and fresh, or "hand hacked," as the menu puts it. There are chips, of course, but the waiters also good-naturedly accommodate requests for crudités; the mild guacamole gets livelier when shovelled up with poblano-pepper spears. The presentation of the dishes is notably uniform—everything seems to be served in a precarious but admirable heap. Shaved-zucchini fritters sit like tumbleweed on the roasted bass, there's a snarl of vegetables on the pumpkin-seed-encrusted salmon, and the soft-shell crab wears something that looks as if it were inspired by Isabella Blow. A profusion of salsas, relishes, glazes, and emulsions—the culinary shorthand for this kind of up-to-date nouvelle—can make the underlying meat seem secondary. Any salty pan-fried fish will do. But the wonderful flavor of the baby lamb chops is heightened by a sauce of pale-green jalapeño crème fraîche and a mash of avocados on the side.

Ixta bills itself as a "cocina Mexicana and tequila bar," and there are twenty-six kinds of tequila and five mescals to choose from. But the most appealing nod to the boozy theme may be the margarita meringue pie, a heap of egg-white fluff served with a scoop of lime sorbet and a Martini-glass-shaped cookie with sugar on the rim. (Open weekdays for lunch and daily for dinner. Entrées $17-24.)

—Dana Goodyear

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 30-July 3: The **Hank Crawford** quartet. Ray Charles was undoubtedly a genius, but he had some key players to assist him during his heyday, including the alto saxophonist Crawford, who has been a paragon of instrumental funk since the early sixties.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through July 4: It's going on eight years since **Madeleine Peyroux** released her first and only album, but "Dreamland" retains its hold over fans of her blend of Billie Holiday-esque sass and country-and-Western spunk. The vibraphone innovator **Gary Burton** shares the bill.

DANNY'S
346 W. 46th St. (212-265-8133)—Saturdays and Sundays: The inimitable vocalist **Blossom Dearie.**

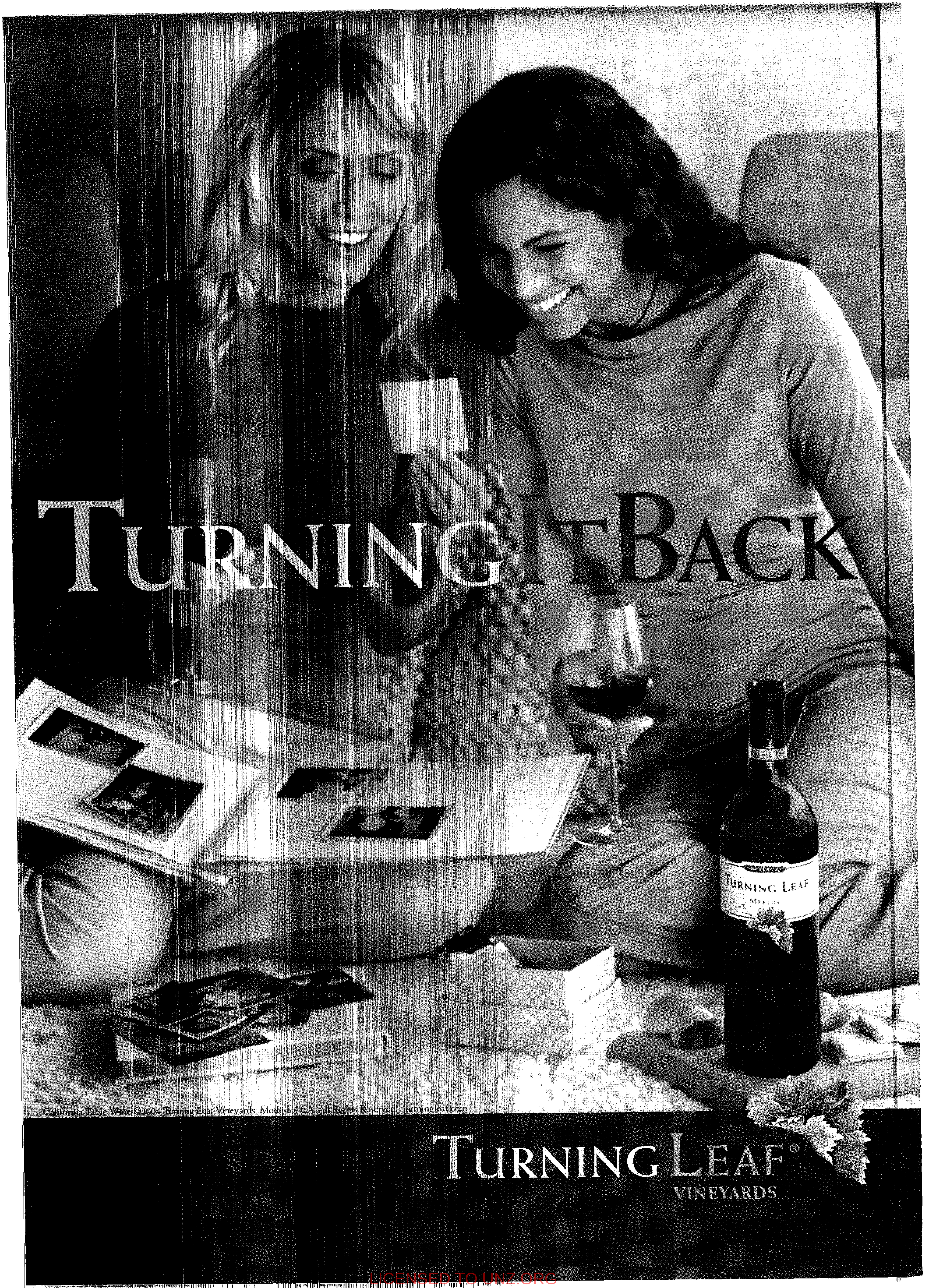
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through July 4: One note from **Eddie Henderson's** trumpet and his passion for Miles Davis becomes obvious; he pays tribute here with the help of a Davis veteran, **Gary Bartz,** on saxophone. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—July 1-3: An old-school organ jam with the Hammond maven **Mike LeDonne** and the demi-legend **Gloria Coleman.** They'll be joined by the venerable saxophonist **Charles Davis.**

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—July 2-3: The **Cedar Walton** trio. Beneath the pianist Walton's mild-mannered surface is a jazzman of steely power and intelligence. He's a renowned improviser.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—June 30: The pianist and composer **Frank Kimbrough,** a staunch member of the Jazz Composers Collective, performs with the bassist **Ben Allison** and the drummer **Matt Wilson,** whose interplay makes Kimbrough's new album, "Lullabluebye," a joy. July 2-3: The pianist **Hilton Ruiz,** whose idiomatic versatility laid the groundwork for such recent genre benders as Danilo Perez and Ed Simon, is equally at home with both Latin and jazz music.

TIMES SQUARE GRILL
1611 Broadway, at 49th St. (212-246-1960)—After some four years downtown at the Cajun, a restaurant in Chelsea, **Vince Giordano** and his **Nighthawks Orchestra** have moved uptown. Manning the most unwieldy of instruments (bass, tuba, bass saxophone) as well as a bulbous vintage Kellogg microphone, Giordano leads a tuxedo-clad eleven-piece band whose ease with early jazz and swing breathes life into an overlooked era. The ensemble thrives on authentic-



TURNING IT BACK
RESERVE
TURNING LEAF
MERLOT
California Table Wine ©2004 Turning Leaf Vineyards, Modesto, CA All Rights Reserved turningleaf.com
TURNING LEAF®
VINEYARDS

ity and affection, rather than nostalgia and affectation. They're here on Mondays and Tuesdays.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through July 4: **Tom Harrell's** albums don't capture the bite of his trumpet and the appeal of his sweeter-toned flügelhorn. You have to catch him in a club setting to see that he's one of the most pungent improvisers of his generation. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—On Mohs' scale for measuring mineral hardness, a diamond registers 10, steel between 5 and 6, and jade a surprising 6.5 to 7. The smooth, dense stone, very difficult to carve, is the vehicle for **"The Bishop Jades,"** a group of intricate reliefs, detailed figurines, and translucent bowls in shades of moss and sea-foam green from the Qing dynasty in China (1644-1911) and the Mughal empire in India (1526-1858). They formed the collection of Heber R. Bishop, which was given to the museum in 1902 and has just been permanently installed in the Irving Galleries. ♦ At their best, Andy Goldsworthy's sculptures are ingenious, lyrical explorations of organic materials like leaves or ice, deployed in collaboration with forces such as heat and gravity. But even a slight visual misstep tips ingenuity toward calculation and lyricism into preciousness. That, unfortunately, happens in the case of the Met's rooftop sculpture garden, where Goldsworthy has installed a pair of cairns made from boulders in graduated sizes. The uncemented piles are caged in beehive-shaped structures built with rough-hewn cedar rails. These are prodigious feats of balance, to be sure. But the wood somehow clutters and clashes with the stone, and the objects can't compete with the marvellous view of Central Park, a grander and more interesting joint effort between humans and nature. Through Oct. 31. ♦ **"Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy."** Through Aug. 15. ♦ **"August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, a Photographic Portrait of Germany."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Childe Hassam, American Impressionist."** Through Sept. 12. ♦ **"Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)."** Through July 4. ♦ **"Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century."** Through Aug. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Jean Shin's **"Projects 81,"** a site-specific mural and hanging sculpture, has been fashioned from the cast-off clothing of MOMA employees. Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Humble Masterpieces,"** a collection of a hundred and twenty-two objects either drawn from the museum's collection (such as a Post-it note) or under consideration for acquisition (such as M&M's). Through Sept. 27. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things"** features a silly title, too many weakly sentimental works, and a woeful lobby installation. But it's great. The room of four "Bird" sculptures unfolds a staggering range of stylistic genius, from mythic poetry to Jazz Age elegance. Certain pieces are epiphanic. The all-pedestal "Caryatid" (1914 and 1926) remains radical for its union of art and furniture, and "Mlle. Pogany II" (1919) is a surprising, sublime sculpture from a dozen or so viewpoints. The Guggenheim's ramp energizes this show, as a too reverential mounting of it at the Tate Modern did not. Through Sept. 19. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

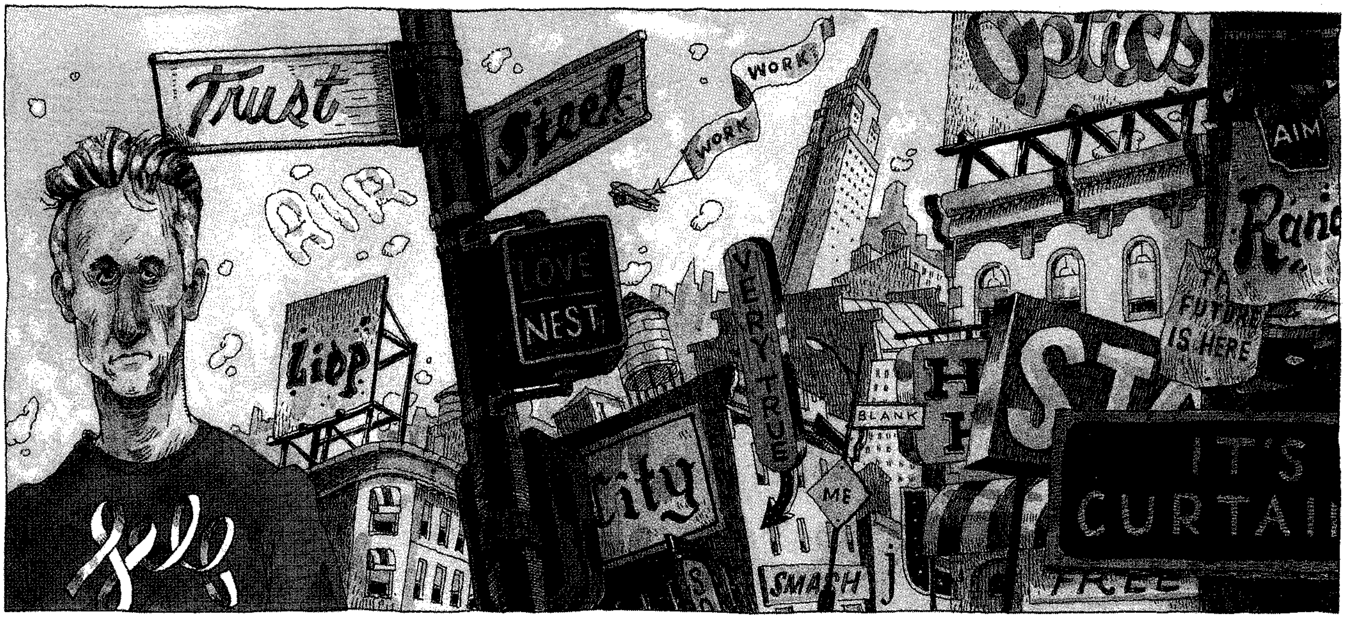
WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha"** and **"The Photography of Ed Ruscha"** present two aspects of the work of the inventive American artist. Both shows through Sept. 26. ♦ **"Ana Mendieta: Earth Body Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985."** Opens July 1. (See This Week.) ♦ A tidy essay of a show, **"Evidence of Impact: Art and Photography 1963-1978,"** samples avant-garde works from the period just before photography shed its marginal status among the arts. Conceptualists predominate: Mel Bochner, photographing shaving cream in 1968; Adrian Piper, photographing herself in a mirror, darkly, during a personal crisis in 1971; Charles Ray, modelling "All My Clothes" (1973). The celebrated "New Topographies" photographers of American places seem a mite threadbare now, Stephen Shore excepted. As often happens, a single Diane Arbus—the one of a suburban couple sunning in their back yard—steals the show. Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—**"Architecture by Numbers"** is, in the end, a show about arithmetic, not buildings. Michelle Fornabai's unremarkable "Interference," a mirror-tinted acrylic pretzel of a sculpture, was created using mathematical algorithms. Marsha Cottrell's black-and-white ink-jet prints look like digitized Piranesi drawings. Preston Scott Cohen's abstract compositions are based on geometrical theorems. In most cases the backstory is more interesting than the work itself, though Laura Kurgan's digital satellite photographs of landscapes reduced to monochrome fields provide a glimpse of how transporting—both visually and conceptually—art based on digits can be. Through July 9. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors"** presents some two hundred frogs in glass-walled habitats. Stars include the saucer-size African bullfrogs, who have been wrangling with the frog keepers for control of the tongs that are used to feed them frozen mice, and the Chinese gliding frogs, whose toe webbing spreads wide enough to allow them to hang-glide. The centerpiece of the show is a large vivarium filled with seventy-five dart-poison frogs; cameras inside the glass walls can be swivelled, zoomed, and focussed with a pair of joysticks to get a closer look at the jewel-bright hoppers. There's a Webcam, too, for those who want to watch from home. Kids will be thrilled. Through Oct. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)— A de-facto borough biennial, the sprawling survey **"Open House: Working in Brooklyn"** has three hundred works by two hundred artists in every conceivable medium. Inevitably, the show is a bit of a hodgepodge, with a surprising emphasis on easel painting. But the eclecticism generates ample electricity—the show is likely to become a landmark. Through Aug. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—Kurt Andersen, the curator of **"Faster, Cheaper, Newer, More: Revolutions of 1848,"** demonstrates persuasively that the thing we call modernity was born smack in the middle of the nineteenth century. Consider, for instance, the Jenny Lind paper dolls commemorating the first global pop star, or the goblets that were among the earliest mass-produced glassware. A pair of eighteen-fifties cufflinks made of aluminum, which was then a novelty, were more expensive than a pair in gold. Through Jan. 9. ♦ In the museum garden, "Fu-



"Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha," at the Whitney through Sept. 26.

JOHN HENDRIX

MESMERIZING

"'THE CLEARING' IS A VIRTUAL MASTER CLASS IN THE CRAFT OF ACTING. ALL THREE OF THE CENTRAL PERFORMANCES BRING DELICACY AND SUBTLETY TO THEIR WORK, CREATING NUANCED CHARACTERS THAT ARE MESMERIZING TO WATCH."
LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL

ROMANTIC

"SHOWCASES FIRST-RATE, SUBTLE WORK BY THREE VETERAN PERFORMERS... THE FILM IS AN AMBITIOUS AMALGAM OF SUSPENSE THRILLER, LOVE STORY AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY..."
STEPHEN FARBER, MOVIELINE

POWERFUL

"ROBERT REDFORD'S MOST POWERFUL, AFFECTING PERFORMANCE IN YEARS."
RUTHE STEIN, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

ROBERT REDFORD
HELEN MIRREN
WILLEM DAFOE

THE CLEARING

FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES AND THOUSAND WORDS PRESENT A THOUSAND WORDS / WILDWOOD ENTERPRISES PRODUCTION ROBERT REDFORD HELEN MIRREN WILLEM DAFOE "THE CLEARING" ALESSANDRO NIVOLA MATT CRAVEN MELISSA SAGEMILLER CASTING BY VICKIE THOMAS MUSIC BY CRAIG ARMSTRONG CO-PRODUCER DARA WEINTRAUB FILM EDITOR KEVIN TENT, A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER CHRIS GORAK DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DENIS LENOIR, ASC/AFC EXECUTIVE PRODUCER KAREN TENKHOFF PRODUCED BY PALMER WEST JONAH SMITH STORY BY PIETER JAN BRUGGE AND JUSTIN HAYTHE SCREENPLAY BY JUSTIN HAYTHE PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY PIETER JAN BRUGGE

R RESTRICTED
UNDER 17 REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN
BRIEF STRONG LANGUAGE

DOLBY

FOX SEARCHLIGHT

www.foxsearchlight.com

IN SELECT THEATRES FRIDAY, JULY 2

tureShack," an industrial shipping container conceived by the Australian architect Sean Godsell as refugee-camp housing, is outfitted with solar power and a bathroom, combining Samuel Mockbee's socially conscious building projects with haute-minimalist design. Through Oct. 10. ♦ **"Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser."** Examples of the Victorian-era designer's mass-produced housewares. Through July 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth"** presents portraits of Montparnasse denizens like Jean Cocteau and Picasso, along with reclining nudes, the brief "Caryatid" series of paintings, and sculptures. Depending on your taste for his archetypal figures, the cumulative effect of this retrospective can be either mesmerizing or a bit wearisome. Through Sept. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"MOMA at El Museo"** distills from the collections of the Museum of Modern Art a parallel Latin-American history of Mexican muralists, Caribbean Surrealists, Venezuelan geometricians, and Brazilian Conceptualists. For a change, works by José Clemente Orozco, Joaquín Torres-García, and Wifredo Lam appear not just as honorably marginal to Paris and New York but as touchstones of an independent tradition characterized by intense fantasy, intimations of tragedy, and utopian yearnings. Familiar things, such as paintings by Frida Kahlo and Matta, feel fresh; underknown artists (notably, the Brazilian abstractionists Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape, with works from the late nineteen-fifties and sixties) retroactively surprise; and strong contemporary artists like Gabriel Orozco and Doris Salcedo exude and inspire confidence. Through July 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM FOR AFRICAN ART
36-01 43rd Ave., Long Island City (718-784-7700)—Ritual objects from the Urhobo people of southern Nigeria are on display in **"Where Gods and Mortals Meet."** Through Aug. 16. (Open Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-534-1672)—Most of the work in **"Picturing New York: The Paintings of Peter Ruta"** was created in the artist's studio in the Westbeth Building, looking south toward the harbor or west toward the Gansevoort Street Pier. Occasionally he gazes north, painting the Empire State Building and its environs or a Central Park vista. The artist has been painting in New York for sixty years, and the city in his hands becomes a pared-down geometric abstraction, although, like Titian or Rembrandt in their golden years, Ruta has become more painterly with age. The sharp line and structure of his cityscapes from the seventies have given way to softer, looser renderings that show Manhattan bathed in a sunset glow. Through Oct. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Fred Wilson: Objects and Installations, 1979-2000"** is the first retrospective of work by the artist famous for his mock museum installations. Through July 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

JANET CARDIFF
About fifteen minutes into Cardiff's new work, a narrated walk through Central Park, her sleepy voice intones: "'It is the accidental and insignificant things in life which are significant.' Kierkegaard wrote that. He was a walker." The familiar experience of the park is illuminated by scraps of Baudelaire, an encounter with a man on a park bench whose mother left her family for New York, snippets of Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridyce." Cardiff occasionally asks you to look at one of the photographs she's tucked in with your CD player; three of them (which she says were found at a garage sale) show an unknown woman standing in the park years ago and give the piece its title, "Her Long Black Hair." The fifty-minute walk ends in a quiet patch of woods by Bethesda Fountain. Then you walk your equipment back to Fifty-ninth Street. Through Sept. 13. (Starts at the kiosk on Central Park South at Sixth Avenue; a credit card or photo I.D. is required to take out the audio equipment. Thursdays through Mondays, 9:30 to 5. For more information, call the Public Art Fund at 212-446-9529.)

ODD NERDRUM
Nerdrum, a Norwegian, remakes Brueghel, Rubens, and Caravaggio in his own image. His self-portraits bear a strong resemblance to Rembrandt's; the rest of the paintings, hung in heavy wood frames in dimly lit rooms, are disjointed narratives, falling somewhere between myth and surrealism. Figures float in boats, crouch nude in craggy, barren landscapes, bare their teeth, and bathe in mist-shrouded water. The artist now calls Iceland home, which might account for the epic-saga feel of the work. Through July 30. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-355-4545.)

GUY PÈNE DU BOIS
A stylish satirist and an influential art critic, Pène duBois (1884-1958) is one of those tantalizing cases of near-greatness. This first half of an overdue retrospective tracks his career from art school until he moved to Paris, in 1924. In the earliest pictures, Pène duBois can almost be mistaken for his lifelong friend Edward Hopper—his style has the same decisive, almost graphic economy. Temperamentally, though, they were opposites: Pène duBois wrote that Hopper made him feel like "a foolish butterfly." Gregarious and amused, Pène duBois became a sort of Daumier for the Jazz Age, painting long-limbed flappers and corpulent lawyers in bright, tart colors. Through July 9. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767.)

Short List

STANLEY SPENCER
CDS, 76 E. 79th St. 212-772-9555.
Through July 27.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

FREECELL
Would that the weather outside were as predictable as it is in Freecell's "moistscape." The Brooklyn-based architecture studio's modular environment combines modern materials—climate-control equipment, translucent polycarbonate greenhouse walls, and chipped rubber—with good old low-tech moss and water to maintain temperatures below seventy degrees (with sixty per cent humidity). Through July 30. (Henry Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-0974.)

ANA MENDIETA
Concurrent with the Whitney's retrospective (see This Week), Lelong is presenting a more modest show of the feminist icon/martyr's drawings and films. In the newly digitized "Keane College Volcano" (1980), a smoking mound of earth and stones near water is intended to link women's bodies with the primordial elements. Another film captures a nude Mendieta floating prostrate in a creek in San Felipe, Mexico. Her drawings conjure fertility figures, including the Madre Selva and the pear-shaped prehistoric Venus of Willendorf. Those familiar with Mendieta's work will see them as blueprints for her outdoor sculptural installations. Through July 30. (528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

Short List

ASHLEY BICKERTON
Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St.
212-627-1018. Through July 30.

TONY FEHER
D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St.
212-352-9460. Through July 2.

SANTI MOIX
Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave.
212-563-4474. Through July 9.

MICHAL ROVNER
PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St.
212-929-7000. Through July 16.

"HELLO, CHELSEA"
Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave.
212-929-5959. Through July 24.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

CHRISTOPHER KNOWLES
A charming retrospective celebrates Knowles, an outsiderish artist with insider bona fides. (Born in 1959 with neurological damage, he is a longtime associate of Robert Wilson.) Knowles's "Typings," which are visual poems sometimes limited to the typed letter "c," and his childish but clarion drawings in ink or oil marker wield sit-up-straight éclat. "Sunshine Superman," a film by Richard Rutkowski, shows the handsome artist at work and dancerly play. Like the Donovan song to which the film is set, Knowles's charisma is feather light, infectious, and ever so slightly sinister. Through July 1. (Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.)

ROBERT RYMAN
The richness of Ryman's white paintings is apparent in these works on paper from 1957 to 1964, the period during which he weaned himself from the saxophone and devoted himself to painting. The all-white-all-the-time label is a misperception, since Ryman often starts by laying down bold grounds of blue and green before covering them with thick, pasty layers of white. Color bleeds around the edges or emerges in sharp bursts. Other squares of paper—the rectangle suggested a landscape to him and hence was banished—sport carefully laid out grids and bits of freehand drawing, or what seem, unmistakably, like studies for his own rounded, block-lettered signature, his logo. Through Sept. 25. (Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

Short List

"REPEAT PERFORMANCE"
Artists Space, 38 Greene St.
212-226-3970. Through July 3.

PHOTOGRAPHY

O. WINSTON LINK
A suite of eleven prints of Link's photographs of the last stream trains barrelling through small-town America in the nineteen-fifties. It includes some of his most famous work, such as the night-time views of kids swimming beneath a Norfolk and Western trestle and "Hot Shot," which shows a train whistling past a drive-in theatre. Through July 1. (Robert Burge, 315 E. 62nd St. 212-838-4005.)

JOHN O'REILLY
Fourteen small, panoramic Polaroid photomontages dense with personal history and references to classical myths. The show, called "A Worcester Odyssey," originated with O'Reilly's purchase of ten photo albums that had belonged to a bus driver from that Massachusetts city who appears in each piece—rowing a canoe, in the woods, standing in front of a low brick wall or near a car. He is O'Reilly's stand-in for Odysseus, enduring a trip fraught with crumbling busts, rubble, doll houses, toy soldiers, real sailors, a Marsden Hartley painting of Jesus, parrots, and naked boys in swimming holes. Through July 2. (Julie Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

AT THE BEACH *Artists whose work appears in "North Fork/South Fork: East End Art Now," at the Parrish Art Museum, in Southampton, through Sept. 12, gathered at Dorothy Lichtenstein's home to re-create Hans Namuth's 1962 photograph. Foreground: Mary Heilmann, Connie Fox, Donald Lipski, Chuck Close, Billy Sullivan, Robert Harms, and Barnaby Furnas. Middle: Barbara Bloom, Bill Komoski, Alice Aycock, Alan Shields, Michelle Stuart, Malcolm Morley, John Chamberlain, Arden Scott, April Gornik, Keith Sonnier, Jane Freilicher, Lynda Benglis, Jane Wilson, and Michael Halsband. Rear: Eric Fischl, Ross Bleckner, Michael Combs, Vija Celmins, T. J. Wilcox, Elizabeth Peyton, Tony Just, and Matthew Satz.*

JONATHAN BECKER

AUGUST SANDER

This show, which complements the Metropolitan's current Sander retrospective, presents thirty-three of the photographer's portraits of women from his epic "Citizens of the Twentieth Century" project. They include farm girls, a real-estate agent, an actress, circus performers, a group of well-dressed girls at a party, and a nun. "Rural Bride," in which a young, freckled woman with flowers in her hair blinks just as the shutter is released, and "Girl in a Circus Caravan," a portrait of a sad-faced girl reaching through the window of a trailer door to unlatch it, are among his most emotionally affecting works. Through July 9. (Yancey Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

EZRA STOLLER

A small show (eleven black-and-white prints) of work by the master photographer of modernist architecture. Stoller, who was trained as an architect, began photographing buildings in the thirties. The pictures here, which were taken between 1949 and 1977, include dramatic, stark views of Eero Saarinen's T.W.A. Terminal at JFK, Mies van der Rohe's buildings at the Illinois Institute of Technology, in Chicago, Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Tower, and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute, in La Jolla. Stoller emphasizes pure shapes. There are just a few people in the pictures, and sometimes a strategically placed car. The buildings look the way the architects meant them to. Through July 30. (Henry Urbach Architecture, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-0974.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY / ASIA SOCIETY

A show of recent photography and videos from China, "Between Past and Future," fills both museums with a hundred and thirty works by sixty young artists. The incredibly fast transformation of Chinese society is the central theme. Riffing on traditional Chinese scroll painting, Wang Qingsong places an officially denounced art critic at the center of his updating of the "Night Revels of Lao Li," from the tenth century. Wang Wei backlights a long line of color transparencies placed on the floor, portraits of himself underwater, forcing the viewer to walk across his face. Liu Zheng's black-and-white portraits of women mourning at a country funeral and masked revellers at a New Year's Eve party elegantly evoke the stark contrasts in the new China. Sze Tsung Leong's large color prints showing demolished traditional architecture are sad reflections on the country's manic race to build. Through Sept. 4. (International Center of Photography, 1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000. Asia Society, 725 Park Ave. 212-288-6400.)

Short List

RUVEN AFANADOR

Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059. Through July 31.

LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA
Robert Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 212-989-7600. Through July 2.

ANDY WARHOL
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999. Through July 2.

WEEGEE
Ubu Gallery, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444. Through July 23.

"GOVERNORS ISLAND"
Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. 212-935-3960. Through July 8.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
June 30 at 10 A.M.: A morning sale of European and Oriental carpets offers a variety of items for both serious collectors and home decorators, ranging from a Mughal pashmina carpet from Northern India (expected to bring up to forty-five thousand dollars) to more modestly priced examples of Heriz, Agra, and Sultanabad carpets. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

CONCERTS IN TOWN

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "SUMMERTIME CLASSICS"
Bramwell Tovey, the Canadian conductor renowned for popularizing new music, bridges the gap between the varied repertoire of the orchestra's regular season and the warhorse-heavy programming of the summer parks concerts with a schedule of light-classical fare. The final round of concerts begins with an evening of operetta from the Viennese and British traditions, with the soprano Tracy Dahl, the City Opera baritone Richard Suart (making his Philharmonic début), and others joining Tovey for excerpts from shows by Johann Strauss II ("Die Fledermaus"), Lehár, and Gilbert and Sullivan (numbers from "Patience," "The Mikado," and "The Pirates of Penzance"). (July 1 at 7:30 and July 2 at 8.) ♦ An Independence Day weekend program avoids military pomp in favor of saucier Americana by John Adams, Bernstein, Copland, Gershwin ("Rhapsody in Blue," featuring the Philharmonic début of the pianist Jon Kimura Parker), and Grofé (the "Grand Canyon Suite," a charmer that the orchestra hasn't played in years). (July 3 at 8 and July 4 at 5.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

"SCHUMANN SCORES ON BROADWAY"
Robert Schumann is not the first composer one would associate with Manhattan's most famous thoroughfare, but Trinity Church uses its place at the base of the Great White Way to mount a summer-long festival of free Thursday-afternoon concerts promoting the music of the febrile Romantic genius. Ruth Laredo begins the series with a recital of piano music by the young Schumann that includes the "Kinderszenen," "Kreisleriana," and "Carnaval." (Broadway at Wall St. July 1 at 1. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC
For those seeking a distraction from patriotic fare, the diminutive chamber orchestra I Solisti Italiani will crowd the barge's stage to perform such European favorites as Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E Flat Major for Violin and Viola (featuring Bargemusic's artistic director, the violinist Mark Peskanov), and Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. July 1-3 at 7:30 and July 4 at 4.)

OUT OF TOWN

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
July 1 at 7:30: The violinist and violist Ida Kavafian lends her powerful artistry to a concert by the young Amelia Trio for a concert that includes piano trios by Beethoven and John Harbison (a world première) along with Brahms's Piano Quartet in G Minor, one of the great summer-music standbys. ♦ July 2 at 8: "The Critics," a concert project of Michael Barrett, Caramoor's new general director, features performances of new and recent works (by, among others, Jennifer Higdon) given by the spunky new-music group Eighth Blackbird. After the performances, three reviewers (Peter G. Davis, John Rockwell, and Steve Smith) will pronounce judgment, and the audience will get a chance to talk back. ♦ July 3 at 8: Barrett, one of the lucky young musicians who served as close associates of Leonard Bernstein in the last years of the maestro's life, conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in "Bernstein, Comden and Green," a celebration of their words and music that also features songs with music by Jule Styne, Cy Coleman, and André Previn. The vocalists include Sylvia McNair, Judy Kaye, and Jason Graae; Phyllis Newman and Amanda Green host. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
New York City Opera's sister company, usually the source for the most imaginative operatic performances of the summer, likes to offer a mix of familiar and exotic works in productions that favor a deft, light touch. July 1 and July 3 at 8: **"La Fanciulla del West"** might just seem to be "Tosca" set in a California Gold Rush mining camp. But for connoisseurs this is the Puccini opera that has everything: sweeping Italianate lyricism, swiftly paced drama, a rich and advanced musical idiom drenched in Strauss and Debussy—and a happy ending to boot. Lillian Groag directs a new production that features Emily Pulley, Roger Honeywell, and Earle Patriarco in the leading roles; Stewart Robertson conducts. ♦ July 2 at 8 and July 5 at 2: **"Patience,"** Gilbert and Sullivan's sendup of the airs and vapors of Oscar Wilde's aesthetic movement, arrives in a new production directed by Tazewell Thompson with a cast that includes Sarah Coburn, Jeffrey Lentz, Kevin Burdette, and Joyce Castle; Andrew Bisantz conducts. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Each summer the faculty of the Yale School of Music decamps to the carefully tended grounds of the Ellen Battell Stoeckel estate for two months of teaching and concertizing; most events are given in the estate's Music Shed, a noble, wood-lined hall that once hosted the likes of Rachmaninoff and Sibelius. July 1 at 8: Eighth Blackbird performs freshly minted works by several of the school's composition fellows, along with works by David M. Gordon and George Perle ("Critical Moments II"). ♦ July 2 at 8: The pianist Lisa Moore, the flutist Ransom Wilson, and the Norfolk Contemporary Ensemble play more music by the composer fellows along with works celebrating the eightieth birthday of the composer Ezra Laderman (including the première of his Nonet). (Routes 44 and 272, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

TANGLEWOOD
The first week of the summer season—classical, contemporary, and pops performances by a retinue of favorite artists who never seem to age—features three events at Ozawa Hall. July 1-2 at 8:30: Singers and players of the Tanglewood Music Center, conducted by Craig Smith, accompany the Mark Morris Dance Group in a set of works choreographed to music by Bach, Bartók, and Vivaldi. ♦ July 5 at 8:30: Ingo Metzmacher conducts the virtuosic Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in music by Dallapiccola, Schoenberg (the pointillistic Five Pieces for Orchestra), and Berlioz (the "Symphonie Fantastique"). ♦ July 6 at 8:30: Boston is one of the great centers for early music because of groups like Martin Pearlman's Boston Baroque, which reliably delivers cool and polished accounts of the era's masterworks. Pearlman leads his group, along with a band of vocalists that includes the soprano Sharon Baker and the tenor Frank Kelley, in a performance of Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

BERKSHIRE OPERA COMPANY
Maureen O'Flynn sings the role of Gilda in **"Rigoletto,"** the first production of the season by a resilient company that has kept opera alive in the Berkshires for twenty years. Gregg Baker takes the title role, and Michael Myers is the Duke; Joel Revzen conducts. (Chapin Hall, Williams College, Williamstown, Mass. 413-442-0099. July 2 at 8 and July 4 at 2.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The second weekend of the woodland chamber-music festival's eighty-ninth season celebrates the music of Charles Ives. July 3 at 8: The Peabody Trio performs Ives's Piano Trio—whose middle movement, a patchwork quilt of tunes like "My Old Kentucky Home," is marked "T.S.I.A.J." (meaning "This Scherzo Is a Joke")—along with weightier fare by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky (the elegiac Piano Trio in A Minor). ♦ July 4 at 3: The pianist Ursula Oppens joins the Rossetti Quartet for three shorter Ives pieces ("The Innate," Largo Risoluto No. 2, and "Hallowe'en") in a program that also includes Dvořák's final string quartet (in A-Flat Major, Op. 105) and Brahms's Piano Quintet in F Minor. (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
An Independence Day weekend of Beethoven, brought to you by the Shanghai String Quartet. July 3 at 8: The Quartets in A Minor and F Major from the Opus 18 set are a prelude for the composer's most ambitious chamber work, the Quartet in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131. ♦ July 4 at 3: The Quartets in E-Flat Major, Op. 74 (the "Harp"), in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5, and in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 (the second of the "Razumovsky" quartets). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

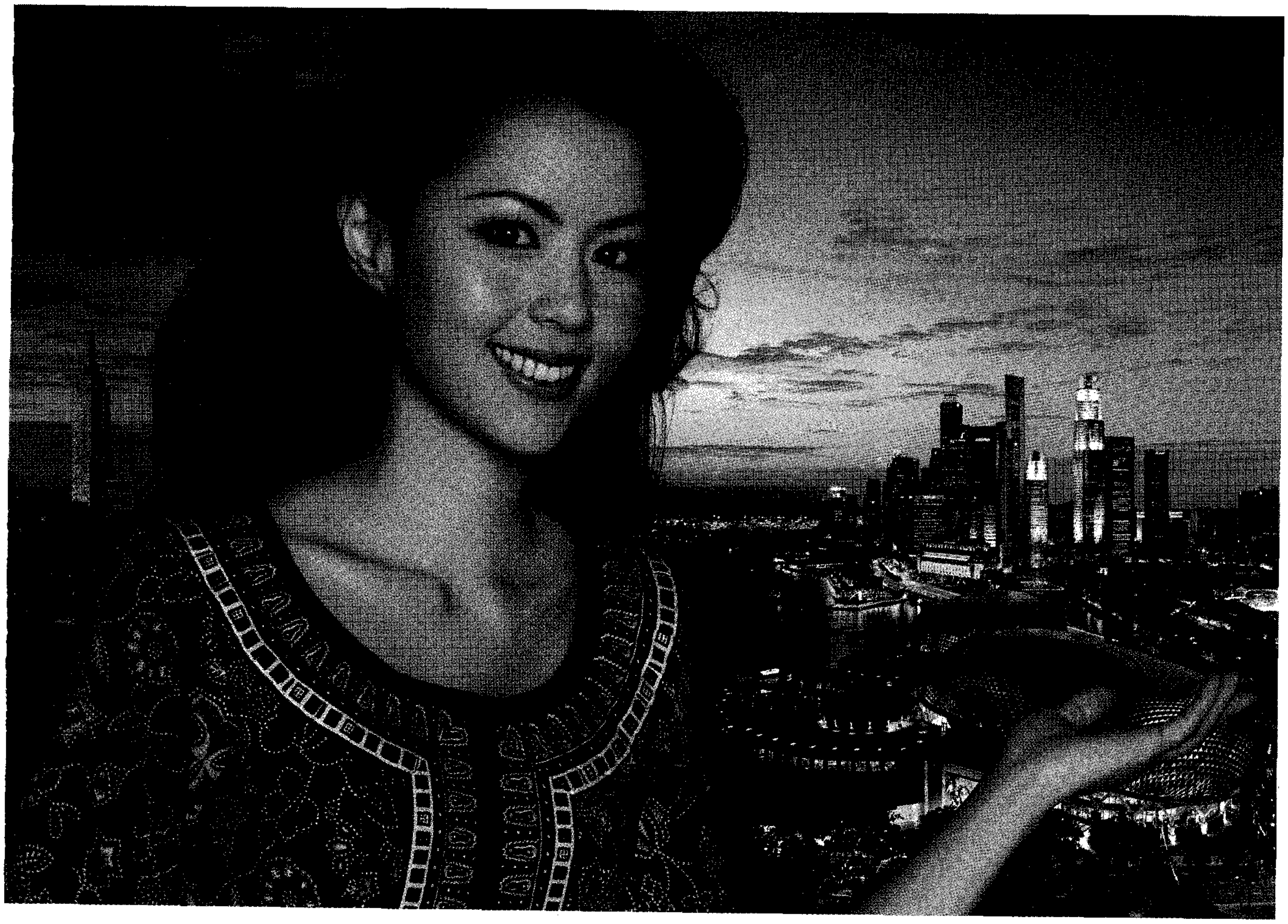
"FIRST SATURDAY"
The Brooklyn Museum gets a jump on Independence Day. The entertainment includes songs from the fiftieth state, performed by the charming Moonlighters ensemble, a discussion about Alexis Rockman's mural "Manifest Destiny," and a screening of the 1973 sci-fi classic "Soylent Green," starring Charlton Heston. (200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn. 718-638-5000. July 3 from 5 to 11.)

READINGS
June 30 at 6: Members of the 2004 Urban Word NYC Teen Slam Team show some of the tricks that earned them a second-place finish a few months ago in the Brave New Voices National Teen Poetry Slam, in Los Angeles. (BAM Café, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-691-6590, ext. 25.) ♦ June 30 at 7:30: Seth Tobocman, Peter Kuper, Sabrina Jones, Kevin Pyle, and other contributors to the graphic journal *World War III Illustrated* celebrate the release of the latest issue with a slide show and party. (Alwan for the Arts, 16 Beaver St., 4th fl. 646-473-0991.) ♦ July 6 at 12:30: Penn Jillette, of Penn & Teller, offers an alfresco reading from his novel, "Sock." (Bryant Park Reading Room, 42nd St. near Sixth Ave. For more information, call 212-768-4242.)

TALK
June 30 at 7: The New York Society for Ethical Culture brings together the ambassador Joseph Wilson and the political commentators Todd Gitlin and Benjamin Barber for a discussion titled "Can America Be a Democracy and an Empire Too?" (2 W. 64th St. 212-874-5210, ext. 118.)

TOURS
July 1 at 7: The South Street Seaport offers a peek of its renovation of Schermerhorn Row, including the original rooms from the Fulton Ferry Hotel, the setting of Joseph Mitchell's piece "Up in the Old Hotel." (For more information, call 212-748-8786.) ♦ July 2 at 6: The transportation advocacy group Time's Up! presents a moonlight picnic at the Lower East Side Ecology Center, in the East River Park, followed by a guided nocturnal bicycle ride through Central Park. (For more information, call 212-802-8222.)

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER,
FLY NON-STOP FROM NEW YORK TO SINGAPORE.



Now the world is an even smaller place. After introducing the first non-stop flight between Los Angeles and Singapore in February, Singapore Airlines now offers daily non-stop service between New York (Newark) and Singapore. Enjoy more comfort and space on our new Airbus 340–500 while reducing travel time by up to four hours. Experience a more luxurious *Raffles Class* or our new *Executive Economy Class*, both specially designed with the executive traveler in mind. And of course, the inflight service even other airlines talk about.

A great way to fly
SINGAPORE AIRLINES ™
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

www.nonstop2singapore.com

MOVIES OPENING

AMERICA'S HEART & SOUL
A documentary directed by Louis Schwartzberg, in which he travels across the United States and interviews ordinary people about their dreams and aspirations. Opening July 2.

BEFORE SUNSET
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 2. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BONJOUR MONSIEUR SHLOMI
An Israeli comedy about a teen-age boy who takes care of his senile grandfather and settles fights among his squabbling family members. Directed by Shemi Zarhin. In Hebrew. Opening July 2. (Quad Cinema and Sutton 1 and 2.)

THE CLEARING
In a thriller directed by Pieter Jan Brugge, Robert Redford plays a kidnapped businessman who tries to negotiate his own release. With Helen Mirren and Willem Dafoe. Opening July 2.

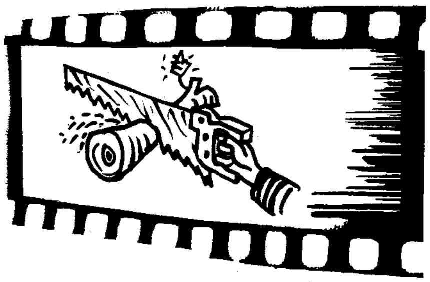
THE CORPORATION
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening June 30. (Film Forum.)

DE-LOVELY
A musical bio-pic about the composer Cole Porter (Kevin Kline), which unfolds as though it were one of his stage shows. Elvis Costello, Alanis Morissette, Diana Krall, Robbie Williams, and others perform songs. Directed by Irwin Winkler. Opening July 2.

SPIDER-MAN 2
The further adventures of Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire), directed by Sam Raimi. With Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane, James Franco as Harry Osborn, and Alfred Molina as the villain Doc Ock. Opening June 30.

FILM NOTES

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
David Twohy, a writer and director who has done some terrific work in the past ("Below," "The Arrival"), crash-lands in this bloated sequel to his lean and mean sci-fi adventure from 2000, "Pitch Black." Vin Diesel returns to star as Riddick, a snarling antihero ex-con who, this time, is out to save the universe from evil. Huh? The overwhelming use of digital effects obliterates the story—a convoluted plot about an armored, half-dead army of "necromongers" who embark on a holy crusade. The action is nonstop and the sets are massive—it's an expensive production—but everything is photographed so murkily that the film seems mired in its own excess.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



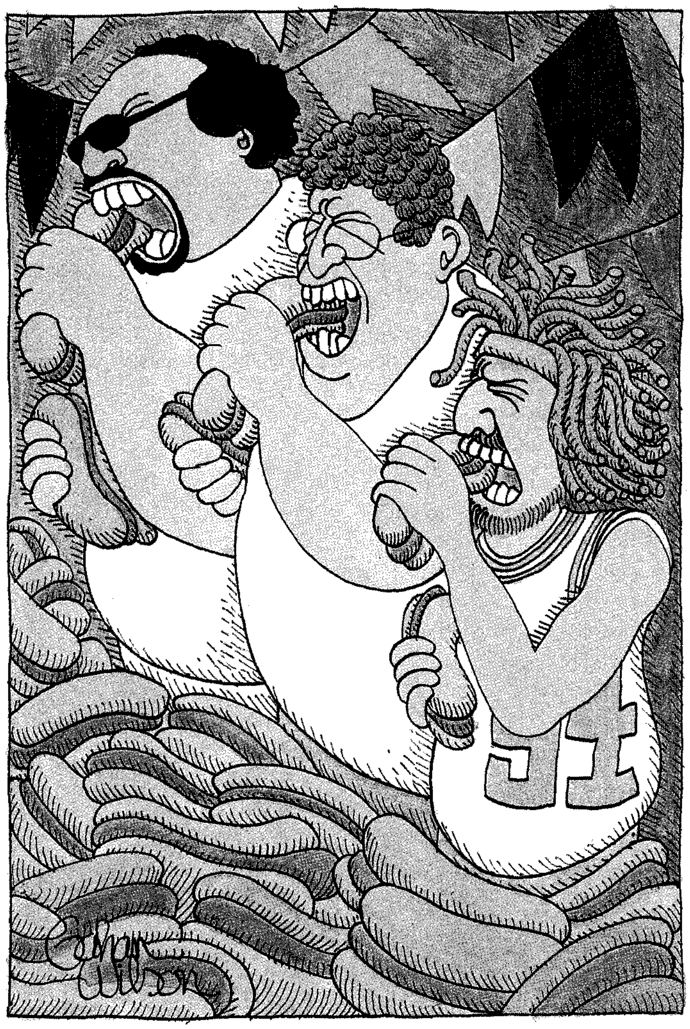
COFFEE AND CIGARETTES
Cinematic doodles from the writer-director Jim Jarmusch. The movie, seventeen years in the making, consists of a series of black-and-white vignettes involving caffeine and nicotine. While those two substances complement each other, Jarmusch, ever the hip mad scientist, throws together odd combinations of actors and singers. Some pairings—like the laconic comic Steven Wright and the Italian yo-yo Roberto Benigni—turn out to be duds, but other encounters—like the one between the hip-hoppers the RZA and the GZA and a woozy Bill Murray—have a singular, irreproducible chemistry. Jarmusch doesn't have any grand theme; he's just playing around. With Alfred Molina, Steve Coogan, Cate Blanchett, and Taylor Mead, who gives the film a wonderful valedictory moment when he mysteriously hears Mahler's "I Have Lost Track of the World."—*Michael Agger* (Sunshine Cinema.)

CONTROL ROOM
A documentary, directed by Jehane Noujaim, about Al Jazeera, the Arab television station that pulls in forty million viewers without a single game show. The film was made during the invasion of Iraq by Coalition forces, an event that it covers from an angle not entirely shared by Fox News. On every side, there was a measure of wishful thinking; the staff at Al Jazeera, for example, most of them perspicacious and engaging in the extreme, appear genuinely dumbstruck when reports stating that American forces have reached the heart of Baghdad turn out to be true. More surprising still, the pivotal figure in the picture is an American—Lieutenant Josh Rushing, a press officer, who gives the Al Jazeera side of the argument a far more sympathetic hearing than the White House would consider wise. In fact, the film itself is more judicious in its choice of talking heads than in its delivery of basic information; by the end, we still know dangerously little about the origins, schedules, and funding of the station. Those who know Al Jazeera only as a bête noire of the Secretary of Defense, however, will relish the chance to see inside.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/24/04.) (Sunshine Cinema and Sutton 1 and 2.)

THE CORPORATION
America's dominant institution gets a thorough "Frontline"-like going over in this documentary based on Joel Bakan's best-selling exposé. The film looks at corporations as legal entities and examines their manipulative business practices in interviews with C.E.O.s, whistle-blowers, and media figures such as Naomi Klein, Michael Moore, Ray Anderson, and Noam Chomsky. And, in what turns out to be a depressingly accurate observation, the filmmakers compare the behavior of corporations to that of psychopaths. Despite constant revelations, the film's nearly two-and-a-half-hour running time is exhausting—that's a lot of bad news to process.—*B.D.* (Film Forum.)

THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW
A cautionary tale disguised as a disaster flick. Roland Emmerich, who gave us aggressive aliens in "Independence Day" and unhelpfully large lizards in "Godzilla," has turned his attention to global warming—a foe so unsatisfying that you can't even shoot it down. Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid) is a climatologist who realizes, as a slice of the polar ice cap slides into the sea, that the end of the world is nigh. Needless to say, nobody believes him until it's too late, by which time Los Angeles is being danced upon by tornadoes and New York is doing a convincing impersonation of a frozen Daiquiri. Millions perish, but that is not the problem. The problem is that Jack, based in Washington, needs badly to bond with his moony son (Jake Gyllenhaal), who is sitting tight in the New York Public Library with plenty to read and a cozy fellow-student (Emmy Rossum) to keep him warm. Meanwhile, the rest of the population is hurrying south to Mexico. The special effects rely less on credibility than on bombast, and the whole project is so dumb, ill-written, and condescending that it may become counterproductive, with viewers fleeing the cinema and vowing never to recycle again.—*A.L.* (6/7/04) (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

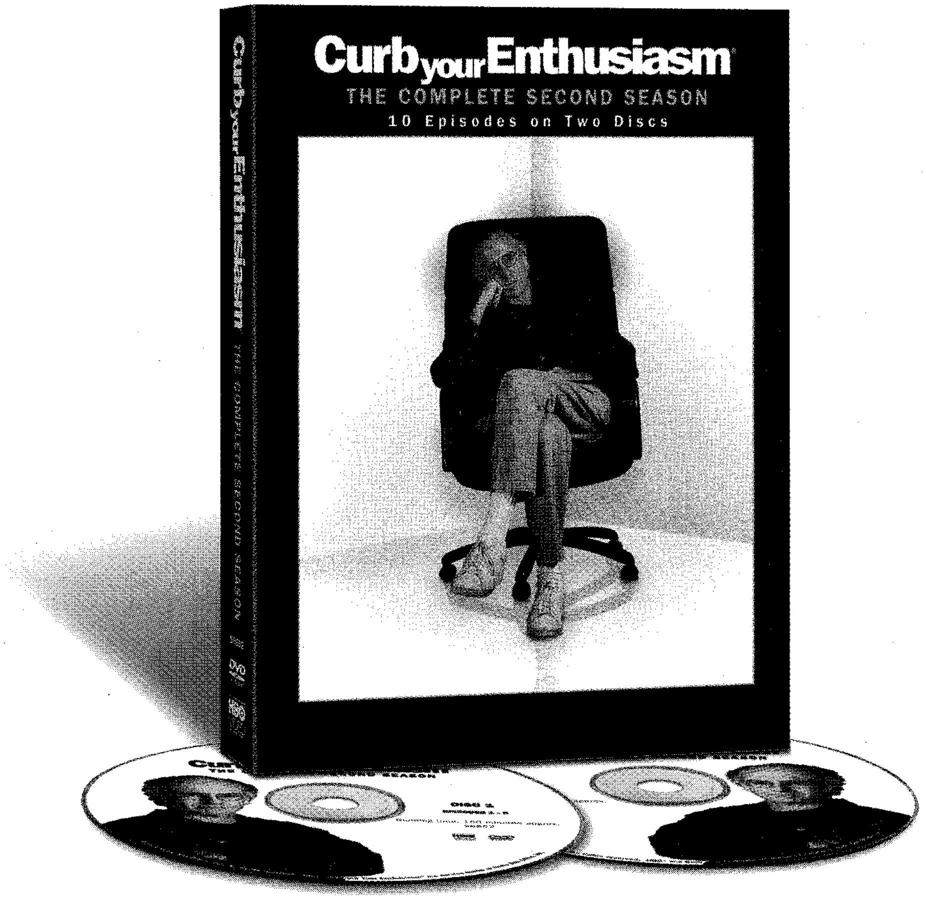
DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY
The year of Ben Stiller (this is his fourth film to be released since January) continues with this hit-and-miss comedy. Stiller plays the owner of a corporate fitness center who's plotting to drive a local gym out of business. The cool-as-sweat Vince Vaughn plays the gym's owner, and, in classic "Bad News Bears" style, he puts together a team of misfits to win a tournament and save the day. Rawson Marshall Thurber's ragtag direction and writing leave plenty of room for the great supporting cast to let it rip. Especially so in the case of Rip Torn, who plays a tough, wheel-chair-using trainer. Jason Bateman and Gary Cole provide laughs as clueless sports commentators, and a host of cameo performers (including Lance Armstrong



At BAM Rose Cinemas, "Crazy Legs Conti" documents the life of a window washer who becomes a hot-dog-eating champion.

GAHAN WILSON

©2004 Home Box Office, Inc. All rights reserved. HBO® and Curb Your Enthusiasm℠ are service marks of Home Box Office, Inc.


Curb your Enthusiasm
THE COMPLETE SECOND SEASON
10 Episodes on Two Discs

Warning: Contents under pressure.

Curb Your Enthusiasm. Own the complete second season of HBO's award-winning comedy series from Larry David, co-creator of Seinfeld.

HBO® VIDEO

and William Shatner) hurtle their lines at the audience with glee. The movie is goofy, ridiculous, and, all in all, somewhat inspiring.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

DOG DAY AFTERNOON

One of the best "New York" movies ever made. Sidney Lumet directed this fictional re-creation of an unusual bank robbery on a ninety-seven-degree day in August, 1972, working from Frank R. Pierson's very fine script. Sonny (Al Pacino), who is trapped in the middle of robbing a bank, with a crowd gathering in the street outside, is a married working-class man; he got into this robbery mess by trying to raise money for his lover Leon (Chris Sarandon) to have a sex-change operation. The most touching element in the film is Sonny's inability to handle all the responsibilities he has assumed. Though he is driven mad by his situation, he is trying to do the right thing by everybody—his wife and children, the suicidal Leon, the hostages in the bank. In the sequence in which Sonny dictates his will, we can see that inside this bungling robber there's a complicatedly unhappy man, operating out of a sense of noblesse oblige. Lumet keeps so much low comedy and crazy melodrama going on in the bank, on the street, among the police, that he can risk the long, quiet scenes that draw us in. (He doesn't even use a musical track.) Pacino's Sonny, grandstanding to the crowds who cheer him on, brings just the right urban craziness to the situation. The cast, which is huge and of highly variable quality, includes Penny Allen, Carol Kane, Gary Springer, James Broderick, Judith Malina, Susan Peretz, and Sully Boyar. (Sonny is based on John Wojtowicz, who was serving a twenty-year sentence when the film was released in 1975.)—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; July 2.)

FAHRENHEIT 9/11

Michael Moore's new documentary is an incendiary and viciously funny attack on the Bush Administration—a whirlwind of political charges, sinister implications, and derision—in which the President comes off as a betrayer and fool who has all the substance of a stuffed doll. Moore accuses Bush of handing part of America's sovereignty over to the Saudis; he implies that the President, after 9/11, was more effective at frightening the electorate than at pursuing the terrorists; he presents America as an oligarchy in which the wealthy control everything while luring the dispossessed to "volunteer" in endless wars. Saying that pieces of this are true, or partly true, or true when joined to counterclaims—isn't the Army mostly a boon for the working class?—doesn't settle the journalistic issue. The movie's more radical allegations, which arrive like a shower of poison darts, are impossible to sort out and evaluate, and Moore often joins facetious narration to highly edited clips in a way that recalls the agit-prop techniques of dictatorial regimes. The movie is sensational entertainment for those already convinced but may repel the uncommitted. There are a number of powerful sections, however, that are impossible to dismiss, particularly the story of Lila Lipscomb, a Flint, Michigan, mother who loses her son in the Iraq war and, giving way to unappeasable grief, makes a half-crazed pilgrimage to the White House.—*David Denby* (6/28/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE FIVE OBSTRUCTIONS

The Danish director Lars von Trier takes a break from messing with America to provoke his cinematic mentor Jorgen Leth. This film documents their collegial yet fractious collaboration, as von Trier compels Leth to reshoot his 1967 avant-garde short, "The Perfect Human," under certain constraints. The first "obstruction" is that no shot can last longer than twelve frames, and the result is similar to watching a film underneath a flashing strobe. It's also weirdly beautiful. Von Trier is as prickly and arrogant as you might expect, but you begin to wonder if his attitude is part of a plan to make Leth look good in contrast. Leth himself is a handsome depressive who lives in self-seclusion in Haiti, and it slowly emerges that this project is von Trier's attempt to prod Leth out of artistic stasis. At times, the casual, high-concept banter can be wearying, but what makes the proceedings more than an airy, intellectual stunt is the final filmed obstruction. Written by von Trier, it inverts and upends the traditional idea of a teacher inspiring his student, and its effect upon the rest of the film is revelatory. In English, Danish, French, and Spanish.—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

Just like the books that the films are based on, this franchise gets better with each installment. The stodgy picture-frame direction (by Chris Columbus) of the previous films gets replaced by the darker and more intimate storytelling style of the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón. The impressively dense plot of J. K. Rowling's novel has her apprentice sorcerers turning into grousing teen-agers, and the movie uses that to good effect as they track down a murderous warlock who means to do Harry harm. This time around there's also a more rousing spirit to the big-name British cast, which now includes Gary Oldman, David Thewlis, and Emma Thompson. Most important, Alan Rickman returns as Professor Snape—his performance is slithering perfection.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

IN THE WHITE CITY

Bruno Ganz embodies an unusual, virile sort of angst—at least until a pool-hall tough stabs him—in this quirky Alain Tanner film about a freighter's engine-room specialist who jumps ship in Lisbon to clear his head of noise and chatter. For one sexy stretch of celluloid he falls in love with a tough, independent barmaid (Teresa Madruga); mostly he hashes out his state of mind in home movies that he sends to his lover back in Switzerland (Julia Vonderlinn). This movie proves that filmmaking can rescue a director, if not a sailor, from anomie. The visual clash between the cinematographer Acácio de Almeida's sun-dappled, neon-streaked cityscapes and the antihero's runny Super 8 footage expresses the contrast between a healthy and a deteriorating mentality better than anything else in the movie. By the end, the film is just a slow-jazz variation on the theme of the sailor who fell from grace with the sea, but it has its bizarre charms. Originally released in 1983. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 1-2.)

NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

Deadpan Idaho Dada. The very young married team of Jared Hess (writer and director) and Jerusha Hess (writer), working in Preston, Idaho, Jared's home town, dig into the weird, flat tonalities of loserdom. Their hero, Napoleon (Jon Heder), a high-school senior, can't find anyone to play tetherball with him and gets ritually slammed into lockers by the school toughs. Yet Napoleon is oddly self-possessed; he speaks with an indignant snarl and confronts people without doing them the honor of opening his eyes and looking at them. The Hesses surround this stubborn nerd with wan dreamers and dim failures who don't see themselves as failures—their inexplicable belief in themselves is the movie's most hopeful element. Many of the scenes are brief vignettes punctuated with intentionally awkward physical comedy. The Hesses make jokes out of affectlessness and drabness—the nowheresville prefab tackiness of the houses and the emptiness of a patch of country so remote that not even popular culture touches it. The movie might have worked if it weren't so dead-aired, malicious, and cool.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SAVED!

Mary (Jena Malone), a sweet-natured senior at the fundamentalist American Eagle Christian High School, in Maryland, tries to rescue the soul of her gay boyfriend by sleeping with him and winds up pregnant. A small-scale production, this satirical comedy, written by Brian Dannelly and Michael Urban and directed by Dannelly, folds its barbs into a formulaic teen movie. The setting is a suburban town that seems to have been scrubbed with a strong moral disinfectant, and the picture features the usual quarrels, flirtations, and pranks, culminating at the prom. Its villain, the pious Hilary Faye (Mandy Moore), who drops the Saviour's name into every third sentence, is the customary blond bitch who has everything going for her but wants more power. The heroes are the school's irregulars, who receive Mary as a friend—Patrick (Patrick Fugit), a Christian skateboarder; Cassandra (Eva Amurri), "the first Jew at American Eagle," a cocky prankster who speaks in tongues at a school assembly; and Hilary's brother Roland (Macaulay Culkin), who is wheelchair-bound and witty. Urban and Dannelly's script is too gentle and uncomplicated to be first-rate satire, but the movie has an affectionate, easy way about it that is very pleasing.—*D.D.* (5/31/04) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

THE STEPFORD WIVES

This updated version of the Ira Levin novel, first adapted for the movies (drearily) in 1975, is bright and funny for about an hour. A bunch of drippily unattractive and frightened husbands, retreating to the wealthy, bland Connecticut town of Stepford, turn their high-powered wives into perfect slave robots. The script, by Paul Rudnick, and the set design, by Jackson De Govia, transform Levin's thriller material into spoof. The dresses of the robot wives are a riot of patterned gingham, the wives' exercises, as choreographed by Patricia Birch, imitate the gently spinning movements of washing machines, and the sparkling mansions are high-windowed and strewn with flowers. In essence, the movie represents Rudnick's riff on the square world, which he takes to be everywhere outside of New York. The heroines include two yet to be robotized women—Bette Midler, slamming into scenes like a runaway truck, and Nicole Kidman, who has energy and spark. But Matthew Broderick, as her husband, a Caspar Milquetoast with a flap of hair falling over his forehead, never seems to get into the movie at all, and, somewhere in the middle, the rusty gothic-horror mechanics underneath the comedy bring everything to a grinding halt. With Glenn Close and Christopher Walken, giving their all as the smoothly malicious leaders of Stepford. Directed, shakily, by Frank Oz.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE STORY OF THE WEEPING CAMEL

Set in the Gobi Desert, this film about a family of nomadic herders has a satisfying documentary appeal. The story, about a camel who, after a difficult delivery, refuses to nurse her young colt, and the ageless methods the Mongolian shepherds use to right the situation, is blessedly simple. There's little use of dialogue; instead the filmmakers (two Munich film-school students named Byambasuren Davaa and Luigi Falorni) linger on the everyday tending of livestock and the herders' astonishingly calm domestic life. The movie, an authentic and warm experience, details a peacefulness that's purely comforting. In Mongolian.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinema.)

STRIKE

Sergei Eisenstein's pulsating first feature, about a strike in a Russian factory, caused another brilliant Soviet director, Grigori Kozintsev, to remark: "All that we've been doing up to now is baby stuff." Eisenstein went straight from working in the Proletkult Theatre to making this revolutionary anthem, and whole sections are designed to show off virtuoso stagecraft. The theatre tricks are nonetheless compelling. And at the start of his filmmaking career, Eisenstein already had a fierce kinetic sense, a picture-maker's eye, and a peerless instinct for intensifying shock, suspense, and emotion with dynamic editing. The surging confrontations between the proletariat and police are justly celebrated. The film is equally powerful when Eisenstein suggests escalating tensions through shadowy, rippling imagery, or when he hinges massive scenes on emotion-charged details—like the strap of a humiliated factory employee who's getting ready to hang himself. Originally released in 1925.—*M.S.* (Anthology Film Archives; July 1.)

SUPER SIZE ME
Fascinating and nauseating. As a life-style stunt, the documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock eats only at McDonald's for thirty days. It's not a happy set of meals: he puts on twenty pounds, develops heart palpitations, and is rendered impotent (much to the smirking dismay of his vegan girlfriend). While even "heavy users" of McDonald's don't eat fast food as often as Spurlock does during the experiment, he becomes an overweight case in point that Big Macs and their brethren have contributed to the supersizing of Americans. Even more worrying are Spurlock's forays into school cafeterias, which have become nutritional wastelands. He tells this toxic story with visual flair and the statistical punch of an inspired muckraker. And, if you want to eat something after the movie, be sure to look away during the shots of stomach-reducing surgery.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 62nd & Broadway, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

THE TERMINAL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

ALSO PLAYING

BAADASSSSS! (5/31/04)
Angelika Film Center.

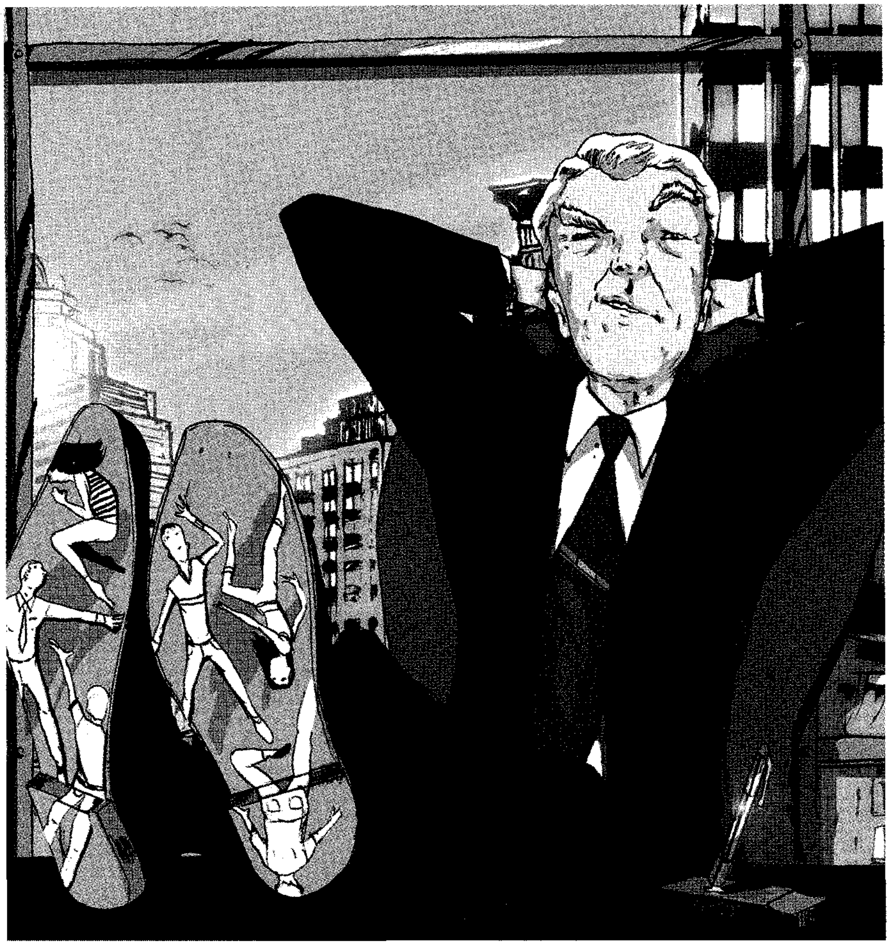
THE NOTEBOOK
Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

TIME OF THE WOLF
Cinema Village.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.


"The Corporation," a documentary history of big business, opens at Film Forum.

MARCOS CHIN

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Starting July 2: "Paradise (Lost): Los Angeles on Film." July 2 at 7:30 and July 3-4 at 6:30: "Chinatown" (1974, Roman Polanski). ♦ July 3 at 2: "Double Indemnity" (1944, Billy Wilder). ♦ July 3 at 4:15: "The Asphalt Jungle" (1950, John Huston). ♦ July 4 at 2: "Point Blank" (1967, John Boorman). ♦ July 4 at 4: "The Long Goodbye" (1973, Robert Altman).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—July 1-2 at 7 and 9:30; July 3 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30; and July 4 at 4:30 and 7: "Bowling for Columbine" (2002, Michael Moore). ♦ Sergei Eisenstein films. July 1 at 8: "Strike" (†). ♦ July 2 at 8: "Battleship Potemkin" (1925; silent). ♦ July 3 at 6: "October" (1928; silent). ♦ July 4 at 5: "Ivan the Terrible: Parts I and II" (1942-26; in Russian, no subtitles).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—June 30 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9:30: "Raising Victor Vargas" (2002, Peter Sollett). ♦ Al Pacino films. July 1 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Panic in Needle Park" (1971, Jerry Schatzberg). ♦ July 2 at 3, 6, and 9: "Dog Day Afternoon" (†). ♦ July 3 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Cruising" (1980, William Friedkin). ♦ July 4-5 at 4 and 8: "Scarface" (1983, Brian De Palma). ♦ A special presentation. July 1 at 6:45: "Crazy Legs Conti: Zen and the Art of Competitive Eating" (2004, Danielle Franco and Chris Kenneally). ♦ A Yasujiro Ozu retrospective. July 6 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The Only Son" (1936; in Japanese).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: Free drive-in-style moviegoing. July 5: "All the President's Men" (1976, Alan J. Pakula).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through July 1: An Ingmar Bergman retrospective. June 30-July 1 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Autumn Sonata" (1978; in Swedish). ♦ Starting July 2: "Cine México." All films are in Spanish. July 2-3 at 1:30, 5:15, and 9: "Wildflower" (1943, Emilio Fernández). ♦ July 2-3 at 3:20 and 7:05: "A Woman in Love" (1946, Fernández). ♦ July 4-5 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "El Compadre Mendoza" (1933, Fernando De Fuentes). ♦ July 4-5 at 2:40, 6:10, and 9:40: "¡Vámanos con Pancho Villa!" (1936, De Fuentes). ♦ July 6 at 1:30, 5:20, and 9:10: "The Change" (1971, Alfredo Joskowicz). ♦ July 6 at 3:15 and 7:05: "Hell Without Limits" (1977, Arturo Ripstein).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. July 2-3: "Pink Floyd: The Wall" (1982, Alan Parker).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through July 8: "Bruno Ganz: The European Friend." A retrospective of the Continental actor's film work. June 30 at 2 and 6 and July 4 at noon: "Closed Circuit" (1983, Rudolf Thomé; in German). ♦ June 30 at 4 and 8: "Behind Me" (2002, Norbert Wiedmer; in German). ♦ July 1 at 2 and 6:30 and July 2 at 4:30: "In the White City" (†). ♦ July 1 at 4:15 and 8:45 and July 3 at noon: "Bread and Tulips" (2000, Silvio Soldini; in Italian). ♦ July 2 at noon and 9:15; July 4 at 2:15; and July 6 at 4: "The Last Days of Chez Nous" (1992, Gillian Armstrong). ♦ July 2 at 2 and 6:45 and July 3 at 6:45: "The American Friend" (1977, Wim Wenders; in German and English). ♦ July 3 at 2:15; July 4 at 8:30; and July 6 at 2: "The Wild Duck" (1976, Hans W. Geissendörfer; in German). ♦ July 3 at 4:30 and 9:15 and July 4 at 6:15: "Nosferatu" (1979, Werner Herzog; in German). ♦ July 4 at 4:15 and July 5 at 4:15 and 8:30: "The Inventor" (1980, Kurt Gloor; in German). ♦ July 5 at 2 and 6:15: "The Marquise of O" (1976, Eric Rohmer; in German).

One kid or two?

Or maybe we should just get a

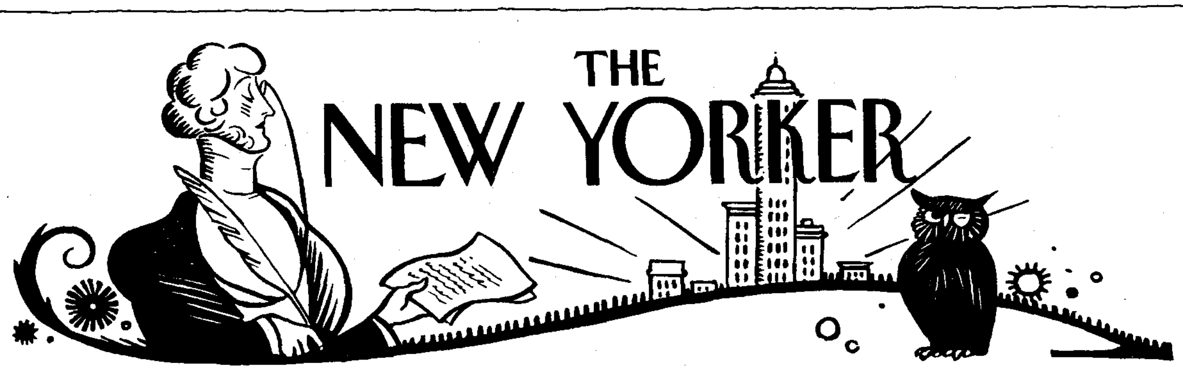
dog.

The conversation is waiting. Go there.™

Grand Marnier®

Drink with style. Drink responsibly

©2004 Marnier-Lapostolle Inc., NY, NY. GRAND MARNIER® Liqueur 40% Alc./Vol. (80°) www.grand-marnier.co

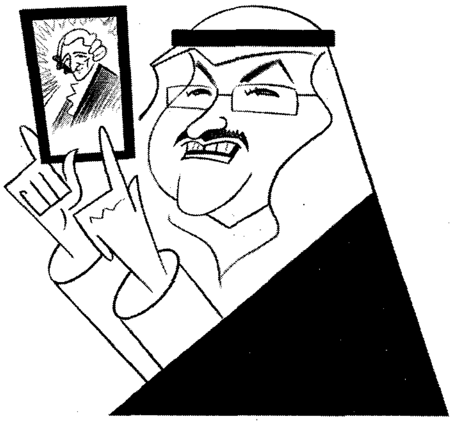


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
WARS AND IDEAS

Sheikh Ghazi Ajil al-Yawar, who this week will take over Saddam Hussein's old job as the President of a sovereign Iraq, recently mentioned a favorite philosopher. In the spirit of his American counterpart, he might have noted the Prophet Muhammad; instead, the name that came up was Thomas Paine. A British-born deist and revolutionary pamphleteer of the Enlightenment is not the first figure you would expect to be named by a Sunni Arab leader who wears tribal dress in his official role and was living in Saudi Arabia when the American-led war began, last year. But the new Iraqi President's choice helped to clarify what is at stake as the occupation limps to an end.

The Iraq war, from its inception in Washington think tanks to its botched execution on the ground, has always been a war of ideas—some of them very bad ones. There's the idea of preëmptive war, America's divine right of intervention; the idea of tyrannies falling like dominoes in a strategically realigned Middle East; the idea that American power is worse than the worst dictatorship. Facts have reduced most of these to rubble—notably, the argument that this was a war of urgent national security (although facts can be less stubborn than officials in the grip of ideological truth). Only two serious, and competing, versions of the Iraq war's meaning are left standing: one, that this is a war against tyranny and for democracy; the other, that this is a war of American domination. It's about liberalism, or it's about imperialism. Where you fall on questions like how long foreign troops should remain in Iraq, or who is to blame for the ongoing violence, or whether the most apt analogy is the Second World War or Vietnam tends to depend on which of these two versions you accept. Few Americans, Europeans, Arabs, or other non-Iraqis have been able to hold both versions in their heads at the same time and continue to function. But the Iraq war has always contained them both: Iraqis were liberated, and they were occupied; the invasion greatly benefitted Iraqi human rights, and it subjected Iraqis to an incompetent and sometimes harsh foreign rule. Yawar—who, as a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, was one of the sharpest critics of the occupation—shows the complex understanding that the situation requires: in insisting on Iraqi independence from America, he invokes a hero of America and a champion of universal rights.



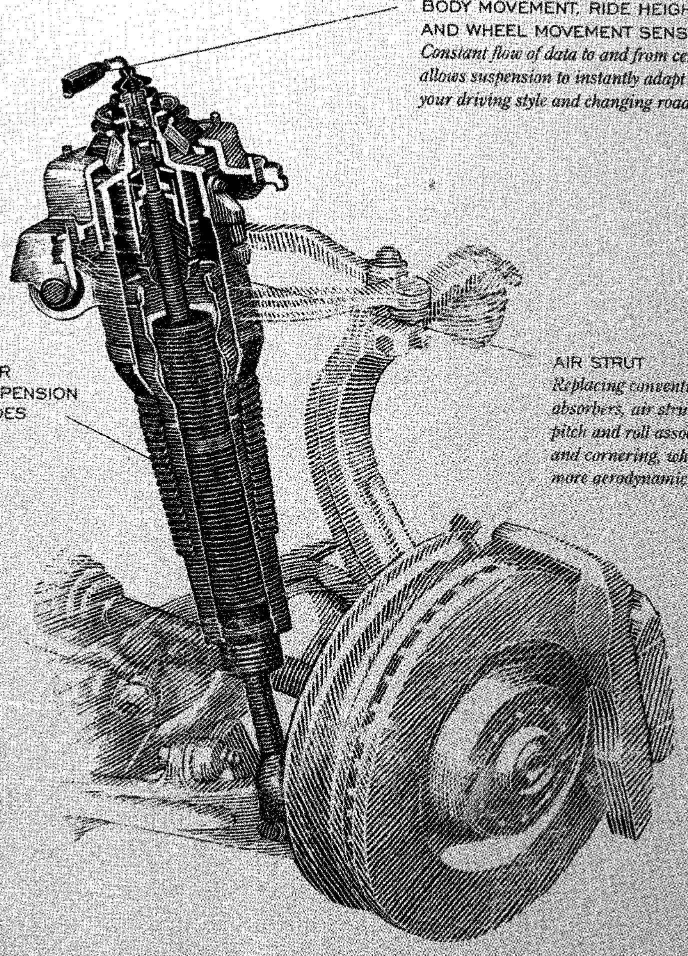
The last days of the Coalition Provisional Authority have the feel of a deathwatch. Soldiers who once spoke ardently of wanting to rebuild Iraq now express open contempt for a people who seem unwilling to help themselves. "I sympathized with the Iraqis when we first got here," a young sergeant who has served every single day of the occupation in Iraq said. "But now I'm cold. I feel no remorse. When some of your friends get killed, and you came here to help these people, it changes you." A majority of the American public has finally turned against the war. As for the Iraqis, their opinion of the Americans in their country has long since gone rancid with disappointment and suspicion. A recent poll commissioned by the C.P.A. itself found that two per cent of Iraqis have great confidence in the Coalition forces, around eighty per cent have none at all, and more than half believe that all Americans behave like the abusive jailers at Abu Ghraib. Sovereignty won't untie the knot of this mutual hostility, but it will bring a welcome replacement of American decision-makers with Iraqi ones. Many Iraqis seem to be giving the new interim government a chance, but they don't have much choice.

The occupation's flaws were many, and they all lead from Baghdad back to Washington. The heart of the problem

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT RISKO

ANATOMY *of* A GENIUS

THE LOWER EXTREMITY



BODY MOVEMENT, RIDE HEIGHT AND WHEEL MOVEMENT SENSORS
Constant flow of data to and from central processor allows suspension to instantly adapt both to your driving style and changing road conditions.

LIFT
For rougher roads, steep approaches and deep snow. Low speed only.

COMFORT
For a smooth, luxurious ride.

AUTOMATIC
Finds best possible combination of comfort and handling based on speed, driver style and road conditions.

DYNAMIC
Stiffest, lowest, sportiest, most aerodynamic setting.

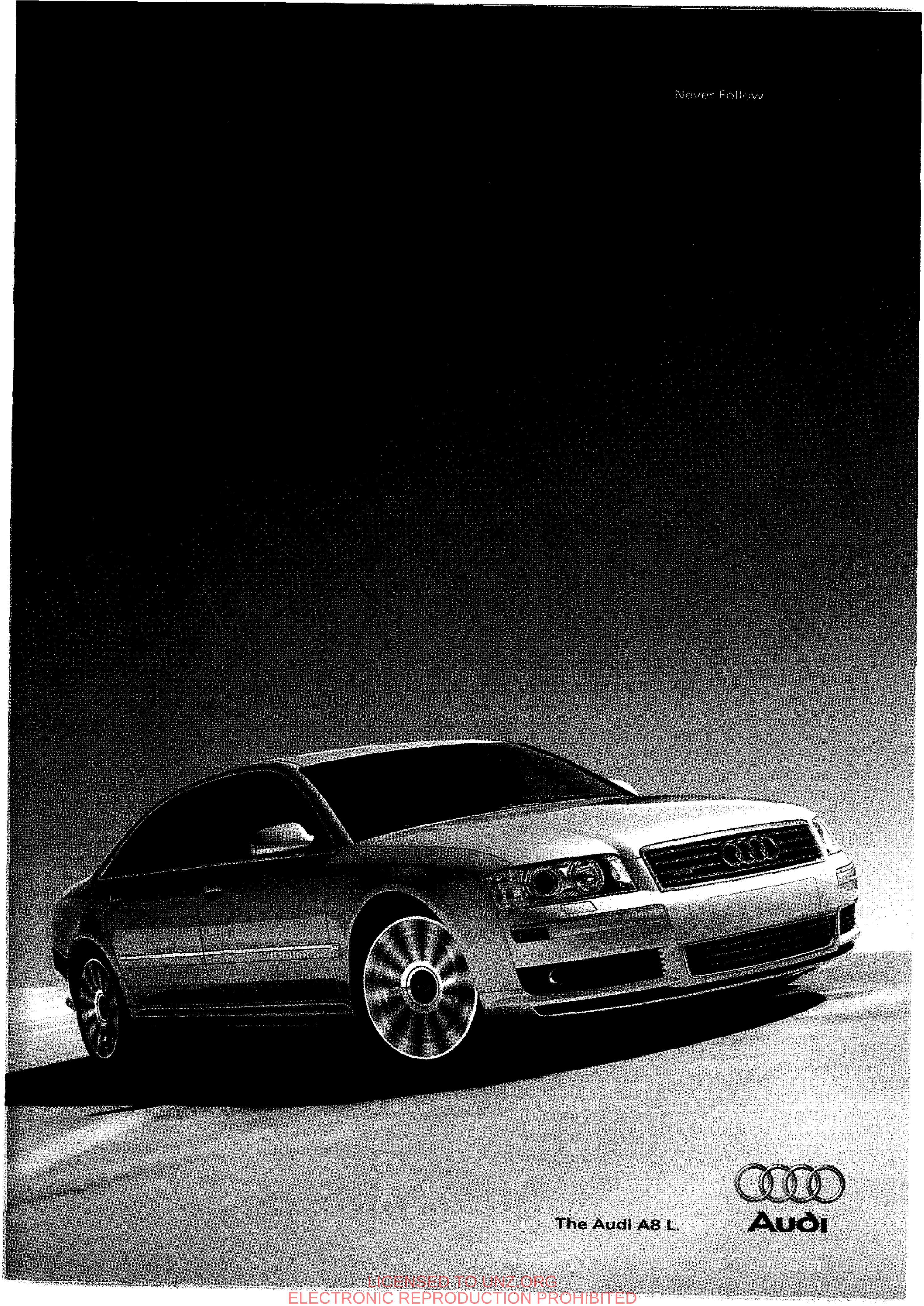
FOUR SUSPENSION MODES

AIR STRUT
Replacing conventional springs and shock absorbers, air struts dramatically reduce pitch and roll associated with hard braking and cornering, while also allowing for more aerodynamic efficiency at high speeds.

Fig. 21. – Adaptive Air Suspension, lets you alter the ride of the A8 L to individual driving styles and road conditions.

The **Adaptive Air Suspension** resolves the conflicting goals of nimble handling and comfortable ride. Perhaps the most sophisticated suspension today, this pioneering technology features four suspension modes, so you can tailor the ride to your driving style. As a result, this premium luxury sedan is a true driver's car, and a stunning embodiment of our Never Follow philosophy. The Audi A8 L. **The world's most intelligently designed car.**

"Audi," "A8" and the four rings emblem are registered trademarks of AUDI AG. "Never Follow" is a registered trademark of Audi of America, Inc. ©2004 Audi of America, Inc.


Never Follow
The Audi A8 L.
Audi

has always been the Bush Administration's almost theological conviction that American power is by nature good and what follows in its wake will be freedom and democracy. This is sometimes called American exceptionalism, and it's another idea that the Iraq war should lay to rest. But at least one idea should be salvaged. In the last years of the twentieth century, with the liberation of Eastern Europe, the tragedies of Bosnia and Rwanda, and the qualified success of Kosovo, a new conviction began to stir in certain quarters of the liberal democracies—that regimes don't have an absolute right to slaughter their own citizens, that the democratic powers should intervene when it's feasible to stop the worst atrocities and create the kind of security in which democracy has a chance to grow. This was always a fragile minority view, and it has become a significant piece of the collateral damage inflicted by the Administration's blunders in Iraq. The war has everyone from George Will to Michael Moore sounding like an unsentimental realist with no patience for any American involvement in moral messes overseas. The closest analogy to the Iraq war is the aftermath of the First World War: we're in for a bitter reaction against "liberation" and "humanitarianism" and the other lofty words that sent American troops into Falluja and Najaf. The Administration has given idealism a bad name, and it will now take years to rescue Vaclav Havel from Paul Wolfowitz.

American power has received a bloody comeuppance, but there's no happiness in that for Iraqis. They can't afford to give up on idealism, because they can't leave on June 30th. Perhaps the end of the occupation will liberate Americans from their thwarted wish to be appreciated and loved by Iraqis; perhaps it will also force Iraqis to stop blaming the occupying power for every car bomb. Then the other war, the one that really matters, will come back into view—the increasingly desperate fight between those Iraqis who want a decent future under representative government and those who want to destroy it. For better or for worse, it's a fight in which America continues to have an obligation as well as an interest. In Baghdad the other day, an Iraqi judge who has survived three attempts on his life as he tries to do his job said, "This is a battle, Mister. And we're all soldiers in this battle. So there are only two choices—either to win the battle or to die. There's no third choice." There was an echo of Paine in those words.

—*George Packer*

DEPT. OF BUILDING

WINNING THE WEST

Both sides have started punching harder lately in the brawl over whether or not to build a seventy-five-thousand-seat football stadium over the Hudson rail yards on Manhattan's far West Side. The New York Jets, who would own the place, will be taking computers from the mouths of needy schoolchildren if the state and the city are forced to provide the six hundred million dollars that would be their part of the deal—or, at least, that's what the television ads paid for by the Dolan family, the owners of Madison Square Garden, say. Nonsense, say the Jets and their supporters, who include Mayor Bloomberg, Governor Pataki, and the construction unions. The stadium will be such a financial success that it will end up *giving* computers to needy schoolchildren. Opponents say that the stadium will sink New York City's bid to host the 2012 Olympics (the International Olympic Committee does not like controversy). No, say the stadium's backers, it is the centerpiece of the city's Olympic hopes.

Either way, the stadium is part of a much larger development plan for the far West Side, which would include an extension of the No. 7 subway line, a major expansion of the Javits Convention Center, a park, a museum, many office buildings and apartment buildings, even a large new boulevard that would run for nine blocks south from Forty-second Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues. The total cost of the project would be several billion dollars. Not surprisingly, many neighborhood groups are opposed to it. So it didn't really seem like a stretch when *Newsday* reported recently that "the fight over the stadium is shaping up to be the most pitched battle"—the most pitched battle?—"since the Westway project."

Except who remembers Westway? A straw poll of otherwise well-informed New Yorkers—conducted last week, with a margin of error of, oh, about fifty per cent—suggested that almost no one does. "An elevated highway?" was the most common response. Even a man who described himself as having been "a strong Westway supporter" said, "An elevated highway?" No. The West Side Highway was an elevated eyesore for forty-odd years, and it rotted until a truck fell through it, around West Twelfth Street, in 1973. Then it was torn down. Westway was the proposed replacement. It would have been an underground highway, running beneath landfill just off the present Hudson River shoreline. The street grids of Chelsea and Greenwich Village would have been extended one block west and ended in parkland. The federal government had agreed to pay for ninety per cent of this multibillion-dollar project. The State of New York was committed to pay the other ten. The city would have paid zero.

A number—very small, at first—of community activists opposed Westway. Their ranks grew, while rationales for opposition evolved, from support (healthy) for mass transit to loathing (justified) for greedy developers and, in the latter stages of the battle, concern (sincere, in many cases) for a striped-bass habitat. For some people, the mere fact that Presidents, governors, mayors, senators, C.E.O.s, and other powerful types all wanted Westway built seemed reason enough to fight it. The project was tied up in the courts for so many years that, in the end, the federal government withdrew its backing, and, in 1985, the plan died.

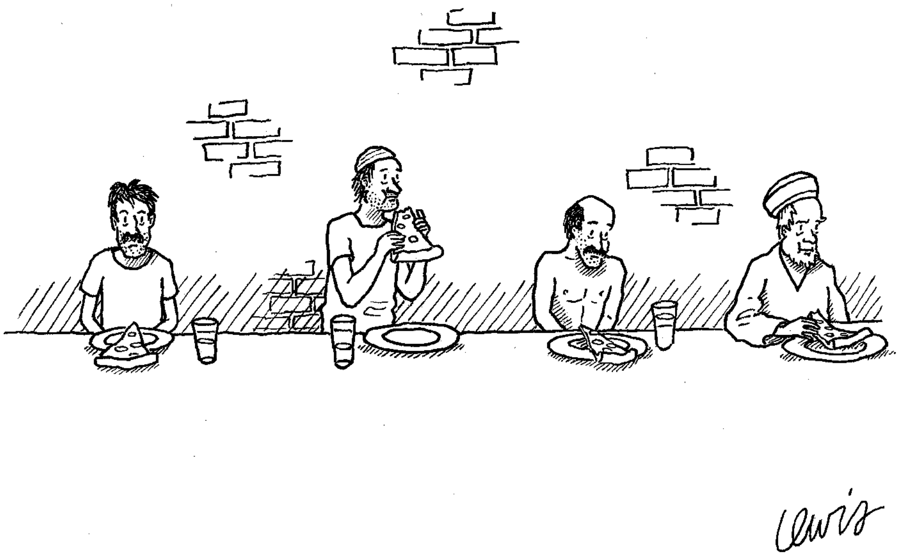
Earlier this month, there was a modest panel discussion, held in the lobby of Pier 40, called "Westway Revisited." The crowd was made up mainly of veterans of the Westway wars. One of the panelists, Mitchell Bernard, a lawyer, had fought Westway on environmental grounds. "There's a myth that Westway was defeated by clever lawyers on a technicality, a little snail-darter issue," he said. "But in the courtroom it wasn't a technicality—it was the truth versus a lie." The government had lied, he said, about the results of its own studies of the potential impact of the Westway landfill on the striped bass, and this was exposed in court. "It was thrilling to me as a young lawyer," Bernard said. "It was absolutely the reason I became a lawyer."

Craig Whitaker, another panelist, who was a Westway planner, not long out of Yale, and who is now an architect, an author, and an adjunct professor at New York University, listened ruefully to Bernard. Whitaker talked about some of the places where the city has had the wisdom to run highways under riverfront esplanades—the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, Carl Schurz Park. "We thought New Yorkers would never accept sixty-five thousand cars passing daily between them and the waterfront," he said. He nodded toward the six lanes of hurtling cars and trucks just outside the Pier 40 lobby. "But that's what we've got out here. It was a tragedy for the city."

A few days later, in his studio in SoHo, Whitaker was still reflecting on the missed opportunity of Westway. "We should have called it the something Tunnel," he said. "Westway was just the wrong name." He pulled out a set of old Westway drawings. The formal, eclectic beauty of the riverfront park that he and his colleagues had planned was startling. There were spaces to rival the Bethesda Fountain terrace in Central Park.

The drawing brought to mind one of the architectural renderings of the would-be West Side stadium. It is a large, pretty watercolor, much reproduced by the Jets and their allies and currently hanging in a gallery in the Village. It's a view of the stadium from the middle of the Hudson. The shore has a lush bank of grass above a seawall, with picnickers and fishermen and striped umbrellas, and above this idyll stands the stadium, its great central glass wall reflecting white clouds and blue sky. What's missing from the picture, you eventually realize, is the highway—Twelfth Avenue, or West Street, or whatever the West Side Highway is called below Thirty-fourth Street, where the stadium would be built. It's just untrammelled parkland, being enjoyed by the public, with the harsh, assaultive roadway we all know simply tucked out of sight. No V.I.P. Heliport, no endless chain-link fencing and battered traffic barriers, no rows of parked garbage trucks. It is the riverfront as it would have looked if Westway had been built.

—*William Finnegan*



THE ABU GHRAIB PRISON 'NO HARD FEELINGS' PIZZA PARTY

• •

ON THE MAT

TAKEDOWN

Last week, in case you missed it, was women's-wrestling week here in the city—or, as Mayor Bloomberg put it, in his official proclamation, "United States Olympic Team for Women's Freestyle Wrestling Week." Bloomberg delivered the good news in a luxury box at the Staten Island Yankees game on Monday night, where he was joined by the squad, the country's first ever. (Women's wrestling will début as an Olympic event in Athens this August.) According to those present, the Mayor also announced that he had declined a suggestion from a friend that he wrestle with the girls, naked, in the mud.

The next day, the women wore T-shirts and gym shorts, mostly, when they assembled for the opening of the squad's training camp, at the Di Silvestri Wrestling Center, at Staten Island's all-male Monsignor Farrell High School. The Wrestling Center, which is next to the school cafeteria, smells and feels like an indoor swimming pool, not a mud pit. It features wall-to-wall mats (washed each morning with chlorine), and there was no air-conditioning to absorb the humidity—of which there was plenty, even before the trainees, practicing their head-locks, chicken wings, and leg attacks, began to sweat.

All told, there were twelve grapplers—four prospective Olympians, one in each weight class, and eight alternates—and they ranged in build from soccer captain to gymnast to don't-mess-with-me. One female observer noted that the athletes were all "walking" between ten and fifteen pounds over their competition weights, and marvelled at their evident "cutting" abilities. (The women, unlike high-school boys, tend to eschew spit cups and trigger fingers as weight-loss methods, and stick to saunas and salads.) She pointed at Tela O'Donnell, who was entangled in an opponent's gut wrench—essentially a prone Heimlich maneuver. O'Donnell competes at a hundred and twenty-one pounds.

"Look at her, she's *my* size," the onlooker said. "And I weigh one-thirty-two."

Judging from the display that the women put on, Bloomberg would have fared poorly, clothed or not, in a head-to-head match with any of them. "Yeah, he wouldn't stand a chance with no one," said Toccara Montgomery, who competes in the heaviest weight class, a hundred and fifty-eight pounds. "Not even Patricia." (Patricia Miranda, who specializes in high-crotch takedowns, wrestles at a hundred and five pounds and is the smallest woman on the team.)

With regard to the Mayor's earlier comments, Montgomery said that she had heard just about enough of the old mud and jello jokes. "It makes you want to buckle the guy's knees or something," she said. "You know, if you're standing behind him."

Montgomery described herself as "an explosive wrestler" and an expert practitioner of the blast-double move, which makes knee-buckling sound like a bargain. "Basically, I try to get my shoulders a little lower than yours, and I drive on into your chest while pulling your legs in," she said. "I've knocked the wind out of a couple opponents here and there, and it takes a couple seconds in the match for them to regain themselves, but I've never, like, put anyone in—well, once I broke a girl's collarbone."

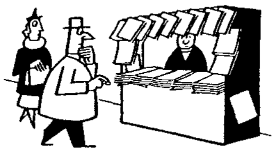
After practice, the team was briefed on the evening's agenda: dinner at the Staten Island Hotel with the borough president, James Molinaro. (Dress code: casual, but not sloppy; jeans, but not ripped jeans.) "I don't know if you're familiar with what a borough is, but he's like the mayor of Staten Island," Gary Abbott, the team's communications director, explained.

Outside the gym, Toccara Montgomery waited for a few straggling teammates before heading over to the hotel to change. "This is killing my plans, just killing them," she said. "I was going to let my hair down and do braids."

The dinner guests were impressed just the same. Stanley Friedman, the hotel's manager (and the former Bronx Democratic Party chairman, who served four years in jail for bribery), sucked on an unlit cigar, surveyed the scene, and said, "To tell you the truth, I was picturing big Russian women." He straightened his shoulders and puffed out his chest. "But they're lovely and charming."

—*Ben McGrath*

INK
GANGSTA CONTENT



The summer issue of *Don Diva*, which bills itself as "The Original Street Bible," has just reached newsstands. *Don Diva* is a glossy quarterly, with a circulation of about a hundred thousand, in whose pages readers can follow the bloody rise and fall of ruthless crime lords, learn about advances in drug-concealment techniques, look at models in thong bikinis, and find out where to buy fifteen-thousand-dollar alligator jackets, three-thousand-gallon aquariums, and 9-millimetre submachine guns. Each issue has two covers: an "Entertainment" cover, featuring a popular hip-hop artist, such as Ja Rule, 50 Cent, or D12; and a "Street" cover, featuring staged photographs of grim scenarios, among them a young man being shot in the face and a group of boys weighing and bagging crack around a kitchen table. A parental-advisory label warns of "gangsta content."

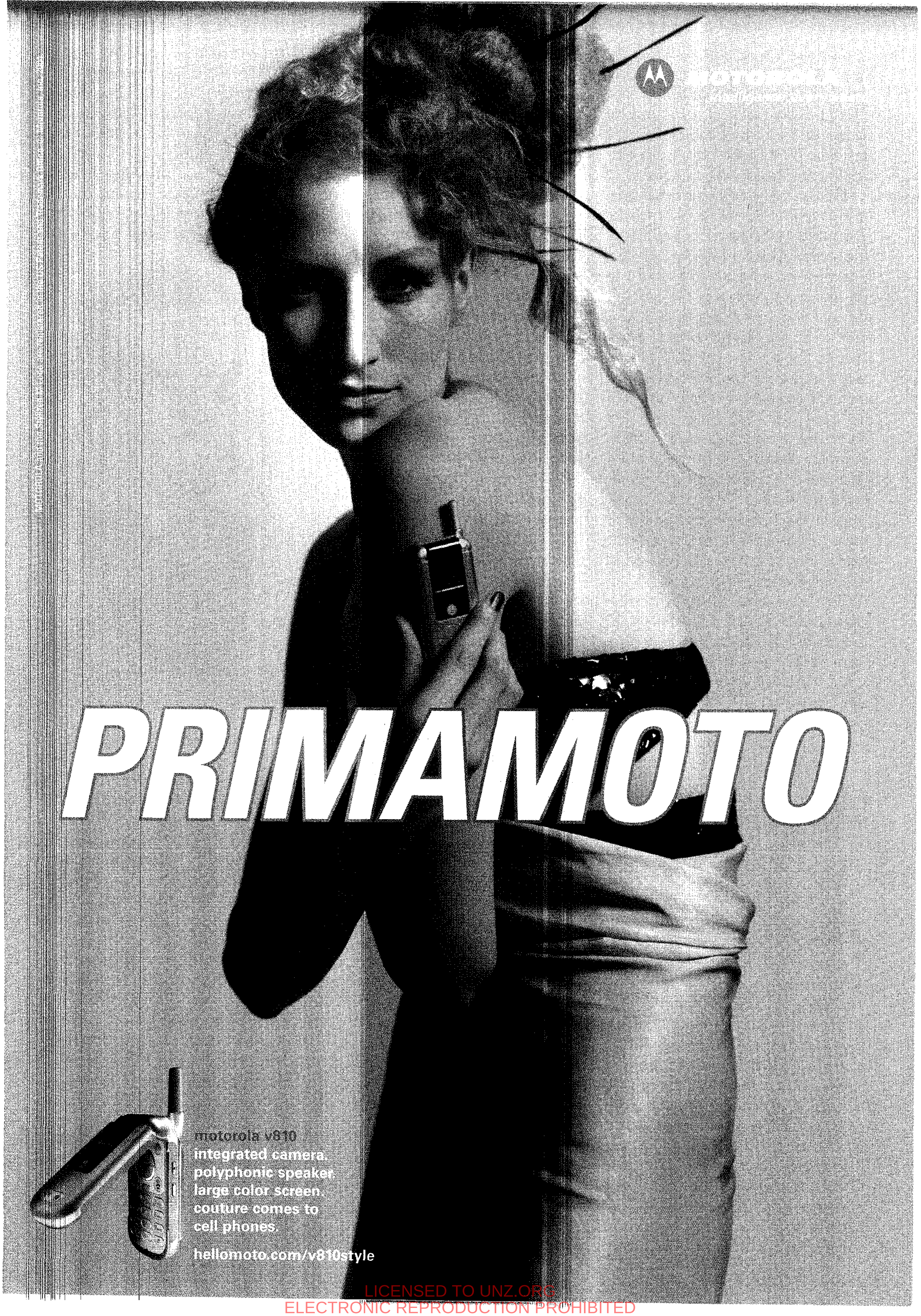
Don Diva's editor-in-chief is a former telephone-company employee and marketing executive from suburban New Jersey named Tiffany Chiles. Chiles founded the magazine in 1999, at the suggestion of her husband, who was then serving a ten-year federal sentence for bankrolling his music label, Big Boss Records, with profits from his wholesale cocaine business. A similar publication, *F.E.D.S.*, which stands for "Finally Every Dimension of the Streets," had been around for a year or so. And, not long after *Don Diva's* début, a cousin of Chiles's husband launched his own title, *FELON*, which stands for "From Every Level of Neighborhoods." But, judging by regularity of publication, number of ads (music, clothes, jewelry, beepers, vodka, legal services), and sales of ancillary products, *Don Diva's* mixture of life-style and service journalism has been particularly successful: the magazine recently launched a U.K. edition.

On a recent afternoon, Chiles met with some of her staff at *Don Diva's* offices, in Bergen County, to discuss the new issue. Among them were Aisha Gumby, who, as head of operations, makes sure that copies of the magazine reach the bodegas, car washes, and hair salons that fall outside the normal distribution channels, and Susan Hampstead, a senior editor, who is also a publisher of novels written by prison inmates. Chiles's husband, no longer in jail, was there, too. He served everyone sodas, while their three-year-old son zipped around on a scooter. Chiles, who wore no makeup and had her hair pulled back, said, "At the end of the day, I'm still a PTA mom—you know what I mean?"

After handing out a tentative page layout, Chiles went through the rundown for the issue. She had nothing yet, she said, for "The Don's Notebook," a roundup of new products for men. The "News U Can Use" section would focus on new X-ray technology that allows law-enforcement agents to conduct surveillance through walls. For a story pegged to the rising AIDS rate among black women, Chiles said that she had lined up an exclusive interview with "a homo thug, fresh out of prison." She was waiting for a profile of a Baltimore drug lord, assigned to Cavario Hunter, the magazine's editor-at-large and public spokesman, who was late for the meeting.

Don Diva aims to appeal to both men and women (hence its name), and Chiles suggested, for the diva contingent, a humorous list piece called "Retire Your Ho Card." Its premise would be "You know it's time to stop running your ho game when . . ." Among the ideas tossed out were "When you don't know who your baby's daddy is" and "When you and your daughter are pregnant at the same time." Chiles also brought up the idea of running an article that casts women in a more flattering light, because, she said, "we shit on women in the magazine, and it's time to give them some shine."

As the meeting drew to a close, Cavario Hunter, who has long dreadlocks and a goatee, finally turned up. After being dressed down for not having finished his article, Hunter talked about why he is uniquely suited to his job: both of his parents were drug dealers in Harlem, and, until about ten years


PRIMAMOTO
motorola v810
integrated camera.
polyphonic speaker.
large color screen.
couture comes to
cell phones.
hellomoto.com/v810style

ago, so was he. He decided to get out of "the life" when, one afternoon, he noticed the chunks of crack and piles of money on his kitchen table as if for the first time. He thought, What happened? All I wanted to do was get a new car.

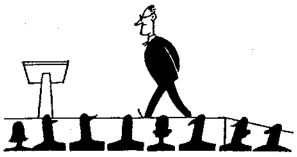
Hunter said that he had managed to avoid prison because he eschewed the gaudy displays that attract the attention of the law. His flashier friends had felt that, since they were going to end up dead or in jail anyway, why not enjoy the ride? "It's the equivalent of jumping out of a window from a very high floor and saying, 'Mmm, this is a nice breeze,' " Hunter said. "But, dog, you know you gonna come slammin' down on that hard concrete."

This, Chiles said, is exactly the point she's trying to make in *Don Diva*, which, she insists, doesn't glamorize gangster life. "It's always been our concern to be a crime deterrent," she said. "You've got all these kids who look to their neighborhood dealers as the man. What I tell them is the man is now doing natural life, or football numbers, in a federal penitentiary."

But Chiles also understands her readers, and before sending her staff home she gave them some final instructions. "Remember, this is a summer issue, so I want it to be filled with fun and lighthearted shit," she told them. "In the summertime, nobody wants to hear about motherfuckers going to jail for the rest of their life."

—*Adam Green*

DEPT. OF DISCRETION
BY POPULAR DEMAND

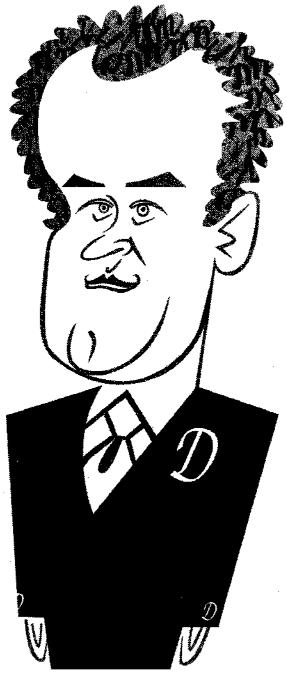


In the art of the high-profile literary striptease, it is always wise to keep something in reserve. Drawn-out exercises in revelation often prefigure anticlimax, and a second book—or, at least, a tantalizing round of public appearances. And so it was, in the week of the publication of Bill Clinton's big, stainless memoir, that Paul Burrell, the beleaguered former butler of Princess Diana, found himself once again reluctantly preparing for the spotlight, in a one-night-only one-man show at Town Hall. (Three additional shows had been cancelled, for lack of audience.) He was promoting the paperback of his memoir, "A Royal Duty," which, according to its cover, "includes explosive new material." "President Clinton would tell you that it's important for people who witness history to report it," Burrell said. "I want to go back into the shadows, but they won't let me now."

Burrell, who is forty-six, has oiled nails and a nice tan and curly chestnut-colored hair. A few hours before the show, he was sitting in an armchair on the stage with a contemplative look on his face, gazing out at the empty theatre. Strains of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 drifted by, reminding him of Sunday afternoons, black-and-white movies—particularly David Lean's "Brief Encounter," the Princess's favorite—and seeing "the Boss," as he calls her in his book, playing the piece rapturously on her piano. Beside him on a small table were a microphone, a wineglass, and a pitcher of water on a doily-covered metal tray.

Though Burrell admits to personal fastidiousness and was dressed in a jacket of his own design, which had a royal-purple lining to match the purple "D" coronet cufflinks that the Princess had given him on a special occasion ("I can't tell you what!"), he is not high-maintenance. "I've got a dressing room?" he asked Ian Osborne, a young retainer sent by the London production company in charge of the show. "Why do I need a dressing room? I'm already dressed." Osborne thought for a moment and said solicitously, "To relax in the interval." Burrell retired there to brace himself for what he felt would be an onslaught of emotion and negativity. In London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane the previous Sunday, the audience had attacked him during the Q. & A. "I'm floating around in this sea of history and media and controversy, and I'm wondering what's next for me. I'm in a coconut shy, and people are throwing these balls at me," he said. A sense of calling—he describes it as a "moral obligation"—must make it easier to bear: "If I moved away and never spoke again for the rest of my life, I don't think she'd be very pleased." He worried that someone might throw an egg.

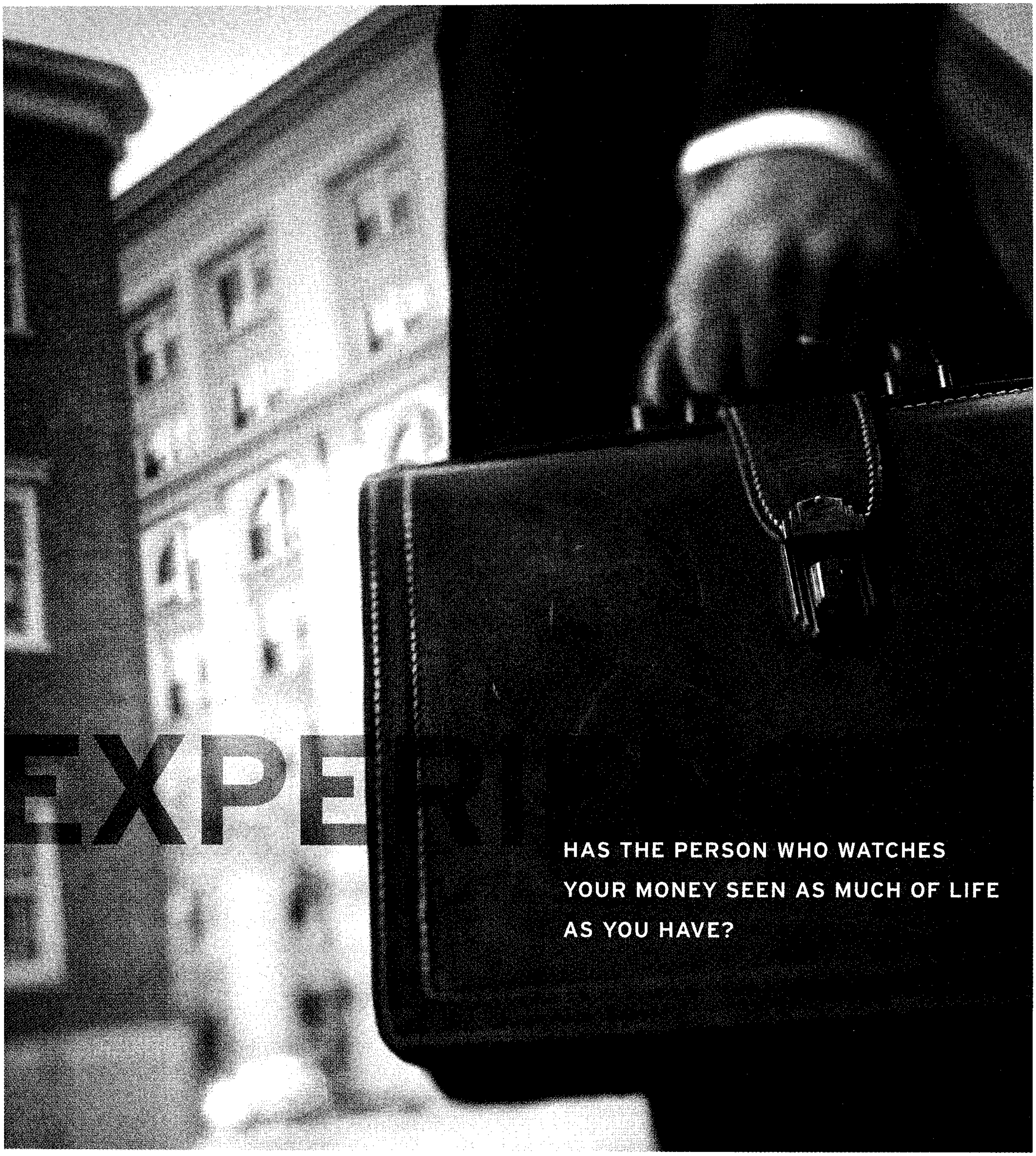
Burrell's concern seemed misplaced, as a dribble of people made their way into the theatre to hear him recount tableaux from his twenty-one years of service to the Royal Family, such as the racy one of the Queen warming her bum by the fire while her corgis slept at her feet. Among the audience members there were Royal-watchers ("I have *no* use for Charles. None"), amateur historians ("He was there, he saw it—it's a primary source"), and those who were blinded by admiration for Diana. "Believe me, I'm so heartbroken still," Linda Ceslik, a Bensonhurst woman with an open, rosy face, said animatedly. "This is sort of like the next-best thing—really, the sons would've been the next-best thing, but you have to go down the ladder of evolution. If I'd seen her, I would've grabbed her, I would've let out a squeal." Ceslik had paid sixty dollars for a prime seat to be in "grasping distance" of Burrell. "I gotta grab him and talk to him and question him to death till he says, 'Get away from me.' "



Paul Burrell

In the dressing room, someone suggested that Burrell might be vying with Clinton for the public's attention. "No—I'm No. 1!" Burrell said. ("A Royal Duty" had just reached the No. 1 spot on BookScan's mass-market nonfiction list.) "Maybe Clinton's No. 1 for hardcover," Osborne suggested tactfully. "You could do a two-man show." Burrell appeared to have already considered the possibility, and replied immediately, "I do have a couple of Clinton stories, but I don't think he'd appreciate them. See, I *am* discreet, no matter what they say."

—*Dana Goodyear*



Smith Barney Financial Consultants have an average of 15 years in the financial industry. When it comes to managing money, there is no substitute for experience. At Smith Barney, we take that fact to heart. Just as our clients rely on their experience to succeed, we too know it takes experience to successfully navigate the twists and turns of the market. With an average of 15 years in the financial industry and an average age of more than 47, our Financial Consultants are able to take real life lessons from their past and apply them to your future. Visit us at smithbarney.com

THIS IS WHO WE ARE. THIS IS HOW WE EARN IT. SMITH BARNEY
citigroup

©2004 Citigroup Global Markets Inc. All rights reserved. Member SIPC. Smith Barney is a division and service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc. and its affiliates and is used and registered throughout the world. CITIGROUP and the Umbrella Device are trademarks and service marks of Citicorp or its affiliates and are used and registered throughout the world. THIS IS WHO WE ARE. THIS IS HOW WE EARN IT. is a service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc.

Yale
The Yale School of Management
Leaders Forum
On-Line www.mba.yale.edu

Peter Bell
CARE USA

Kenneth Chenault
American Express Company

Michael Dell
Dell Computer Corporation

William C. Ford, Jr.
Ford Motor Company

Thomas Friedman
The New York Times

Ellen Futter
American Museum
of Natural History

Carlos Ghosn
Nissan Motor Co., Ltd.

Raymond Gilmartin
Merck & Co., Inc.

Jeffrey Immelt
General Electric Company

Ewald Kist
ING Group

Indra Nooyi
PepsiCo, Inc.

George Soros
Soros Fund
Management LLC

Sir Martin Sorrell
WPP Group

James Wolfensohn
The World Bank Group

YALE LEADERS FORUM ONLINE

YALE MBA

DOMESTIC LIFE

TO HELL WITH ALL THAT

One woman's decision to go back to work.

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

Throughout my childhood, the thirty-five-cent Cardinal edition of Dr. Spock sat on a kitchen counter beside another font of domestic good counsel, "The Settlement Cookbook." The books have fallen into my hands now, their spines mended with tape, their pages buckling with age. The two homely volumes (decommissioned and reclassified as mementos) are capable of a profound act of evocation: of my mother, certainly, but more powerfully of the qualities she embodied for me—competence, benevolence, calm authority. To be a child with a mother who possessed those two books and the cheerful willingness to follow their practical and time-honored suggestions was to live in a world that seems to me now a bygone age, as remote and unrecoverable as Camelot: a world of good meals turned out in orderly fashion, of fevers cooled without a single frantic call to the pediatrician, of clothes mended and pressed back into useful service rather than discarded to the rag heap as soon as a button pops or a sleeve unravels. If a household is a tiny state, as of course it is, then my mother was the potentate of ours—her command unchallenged—although our fealty was rarely vociferous. (If, while wandering through the kitchen, I caught sight of her cooking dinner, I would not have taken any more note of her than I did of the humming refrigerator or the shining toaster; it was her absences I noticed, but she was not often absent.) Her subjects were assured of safety, continuity, comfort of the highest order. God was in his heaven, and a rump roast was in the oven, seasoned with salt, pepper, and ginger, and basted with fat from the pan.

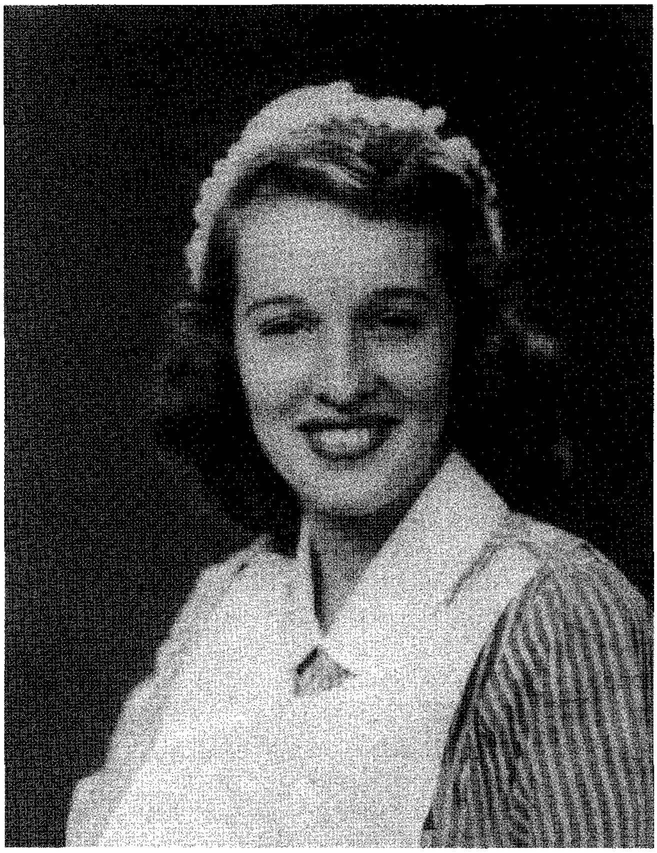
This was before housewifery was understood to be an inherently oppressive state, before a marriage soured was a marriage abandoned; this was in the time when thrift and economy were still the cornerstones of middle-class American life. It was a rare night that the family ate dinner at a restaurant; "convenience" foods consisted of Swanson frozen dinners, their aluminum trays saved for all eternity (for mixing up four colors of poster paint for a bored child; for catching a drip from a leaking roof). They were called TV dinners then, but in my experience they were not eaten in front of the television. They were eaten—convivially and with gusto—in the dining room of our California home, with placemats, folded napkins, glasses to the right of knives. In my childish apprehension of things, my father was happiest when he was sitting in his armchair reading a big, fat book, and my mother when she was standing at her ironing board transforming a chaotic basket of wash into a set of sleek and polished garments.

Which is why it came as such a shock when my mother suddenly pulled the plug on the whole operation. It was 1973; I was twelve. The story, as she always told it: One morning, she cooked breakfast for my father and me and sent us on our way (a scramble for lunchbox and briefcase, the daily struggle to get my hair brushed and braided, two sets of feet stumping down the front steps, and then—quiet). The morning was hers, and she had big plans for it. She filled a basin with warm, soapy water, set it on the utility ledge of the kitchen stepladder, and climbed up. Her intention was to wash down the wallpaper, of which she was rather fond (it had a cheerful blue-and-white pattern with a Dutch motif; she had hung it herself). But as she stood on the ladder, dripping sponge in hand, something happened. In one clear moment, staring at a little windmill or a tiny Dutch girl, she realized that it was no longer possible for her to go on living that particular life. I would have been just arriving at school; my father would have been getting off the bus at the bottom of Euclid Avenue, headed for the English department and his morning class. The fogs and mists that settle on the Berkeley Hills every night would have been just lifting when my mother threw the sponge back in the basin and said—out loud, to no one but herself, and apparently with finality—"To hell with it." And then she climbed off the ladder.

It must have been a bleak moment. She would have sat down at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette with trembling hands. Whiskey, the wirehaired terrier, would have been hovering solicitously close by, confused by the outburst. And all the while she would have been looking around the homey little kitchen—my favorite room of the house! location of bacon sandwiches and homemade root beer and apple betties, warm from the oven—and suddenly seeing it for what it was: the center of her working life. The place where she turned out meal after meal and washed the same dishes and pots over and over again, and waited around, with her books and her cigarettes, for everyone to come home.

She was a person on whom history tended to operate in broad strokes and with enduring effect. The impulses of her Depression-era childhood never left her, even later in life when there was no longer any reason to cut corners. She possessed the sense of civic responsibility and personal fortitude of many people who were young during the Second World War. And on that day in the kitchen a third historical force was at work on her. If an inchoate cultural movement can sweep down into one woman's kitchen and put words to feelings, the words of this one were "To hell with it!"

But—to hell with *what*, exactly? This was the question that plagued me for many unhappy months after the stepladder resolution. Suffice it to say, to hell with the demoralizing nature of make-work cleaning projects—hadn't Betty Friedan aptly entitled a chapter of "The Feminine Mystique" "Housewifery Expands to Fill the Time Available"? And to hell with wasting her education: Hadn't she sailed through nursing school on a sea of A's? Wasn't she still consulted about ailments and remedies by half the people she knew? She was not willing to say to hell with her marriage, which was of the volatile but imperishable variety. But as for cheerily bustling around the kitchen while the union endured one of the dreary interludes that often attend the halfway mark—to hell with that, too. If she had lived in another time or place, certain solutions to these familiar and perhaps inevitable discontents might have presented themselves. She might have hosted faculty-wife teas or read "Middlemarch" or taken up watercolor. But my mother climbed off that stepladder during a moment when there was a single panacea for what ailed her: work. "A no-nonsense nine-to-five job" was what Betty Friedan recommended, and that was what my mother got.


The author's mother, in her nursing uniform, circa 1946.

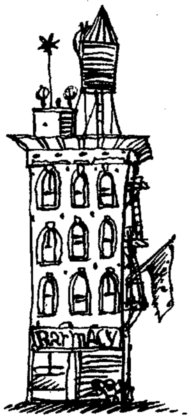
COURTESY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

It had been nearly twenty years since she'd worked in a doctor's office, and she was nervous about going back to nursing after such a long time. But a health-insurance company in San Francisco hired her as a medical-claims adjuster. She bought some drip-dry pants suits and half a dozen Ship 'n Shore blouses in pretty colors; she bought a BART commuter ticket and studied the route map. The Sunday afternoon before she started, she went into the kitchen and made five casseroles and stacked them in the freezer. She left defrosting instructions under a magnet on the refrigerator door, and when I got up on Monday morning she was gone.

Almost as soon as my mother began working, she cheered up. The sulks that had so often descended upon her lifted miraculously. (Wretched little egomaniac that I was, I hadn't taken any note of them until they vanished.) The other members of the family were more or less untroubled by her transformation from housewife to working woman. My sister was away at college and had no opinion about it, and my father was the last person to squelch a money-making scheme (not that he saw any of the cash; the pin money went toward trips to Disneyland and carpet tiles for the sun porch and new clothes and shoes all around). I was miserable. To my thinking, my mother's change of heart constituted child abandonment, plain and simple. "Being home alone is a stressful experience for children," David Elkind, the author of the 1981 book "The Hurried Child," has observed, and he's dead right. Just walking through the front door each afternoon to be met by the quiet gloom of the empty living room was depressing. Not that it was easily accomplished. On my first day as a latchkey child, I lost the key. Another key was hidden under a stone for me, but I used it once and forgot to return it, and it vanished. Frustrated, my mother tied a third key on a thick white string and hung it around my neck, a weighty reminder that I'd been dumped by Mom.

Afternoons alone in the house were often frightening. It did not help that I am a hysteric by nature. When Patty Hearst was kidnapped across town, I became convinced that I was next. We had so much in common—pale skin and brown hair, terry-cloth bathrobes, Catholic girlhoods. That her father was one of the richest men in California and mine was a college professor with a mortgage and a car loan did not factor into my threat assessment. Still, in the early nineteen-seventies in Berkeley, there were plenty of bad things happening on a more random basis. One day, there was a knock at our front door, the top half of which was a big, swing-out window. I opened the window to two young men whose question to me (I can't now recall it) was so obviously trumped up, whose interest was so clearly in the living room beyond me, that I swung the window shut in mid-sentence and locked it. I stood watching from behind a curtain as they made their way up the street, knocking on doors and peering through windows. I reported the incident to my parents, who advised me not to let my imagination run wild.

My terror of kidnappers and burglars eventually reached such a pitch that my mother—who by then had left the insurance company and returned to nursing, taking a job at a convalescent hospital—arrived at a novel solution to the problem, a kind of one-woman Take Our Daughters to Work Day. She bought a couple of yards of blue-and-white ticking, ran up a candy-striper uniform on the sewing machine, and introduced me, at age thirteen, to a career in the health-care industry. In lieu of a lunch hour, she would leave the hospital at three o'clock, pick me up from school, and take us both back to work to finish the shift. I would change out of my school uniform into my work clothes and spend the rest of the afternoon officiously copying chart headings, wheeling patients around the facility (a courtesy they tended to endure rather than appreciate), and making an endless series of tongue-depressor houses and cotton-ball bunnies in the dayroom, where I was encouraged in my work by the young, friendly occupational therapist.



I did not last in my new post. I would grow bored long before quitting time, and it was hard for my mother to do her job and also put up with my pestering suggestions that we knock off early and swing by McDonald's for shakes. And eventually she took a better job, at a hospital in Oakland, which was too far away for her to pick me up each afternoon. Once again, I was on my own, fretting about unseen dangers while the defrosting casserole sat unappetizingly on the counter, in a puddle of melt.

No mother today who could afford to do otherwise would go to work without making any provision for her young child except to tie a key around her neck and hope for the best. My mother was by no means indifferent about me; I was her pet, the baby of the family. But children then were not under constant adult supervision, even if their mothers were housewives. By the time I was five, I was allowed to wander away from the house so long as I didn't cross any big streets; I had the run of the neighborhood at six. So the idea that I would be home alone in the afternoons at the age of twelve was not a radical or an overly worrisome one for my mother. A good friend of mine was only nine when her mother took a volunteer job and left the child on her own in the afternoons. Such an arrangement was not then seen as a shocking dereliction of duty: a nine-year-old could be trusted with a key; a nine-year-old knew how to work a telephone if anything went wrong.

Moreover, anxiety as a precondition of the maternal experience had not yet been invented. We kids were topped up with Salk vaccine, our fathers had saved the world, and our neighborhoods were chock-full of busybody housewives who delighted in scolding other people's errant children. Terrible things happened then, just as they do today. But they tended not to have the titanic significance of the contemporary event. Once, when I was in third grade, we were all given purple-and-white mimeographed letters to bring home to our mothers. The letters reported that a child molester had been preying on children walking home from the next elementary school over. "What's a child molester?" I kept asking my mother, who stood in the kitchen reading the letter in a concerned way. That was not for me to know—but neither was it sufficient cause for my mother to forbid me to roam the neighborhood after school. I should just "be careful." ("Careful of what?" Just careful.) My mother and her friends probably would not have made a best-seller of "The Lovely Bones."

At age twelve, I wasn't doing much that required my mother's presence. The notion that after-school hours might constitute prime time for improvement—athletic, academic, social, psychiatric—was still years away. When I think of what it was like to be a girl then, I remember an endless series of afternoons, each an ungraspable piece of time. I watched television, and hurtled perilously down our steep block on my Schwinn, and dressed the cats in baby clothes. Children didn't have "passions" and "talents"; we had hobbies and collections—glass animals and plastic horses for girls, baseball cards for boys, and stamps for geeks of both genders. These were activities that required no parental involvement and produced just as little quantifiable enrichment. Why should my mother have to sulk around the kitchen, weepy with frustration, her only job to provide me with a beacon of reassurance—and to muscle off the S.L.A. if it came for me—while I wrestled the cats into pinafores and watched reruns of "Lost in Space"?

The rhetoric of liberation exhorted women to go to work not in spite of their children but—at least partly—because of them. The notion was that housewives made poor mothers. Betty Friedan reported "strange new problems" with those children "whose mothers were always there, driving them around, helping them with their homework—an inability to endure pain or discipline or pursue any self-sustained goal of any sort, a devastating boredom with life." Being on my own recognizance was supposed to toughen me up, to deliver me from my mother's crippling cosseting and vault me to new levels of independence—not an unreasonable theory. If I had had a different temperament, it might have worked. (As it is, however, I remain an inveterate loser of keys—and sunglasses and credit cards—and my anxiety about being alone in a house borders on the pathological.) In a 1970 discussion of day care, the feminists Louise Gross and Phyllis Taube Greenleaf wrote that the institution could be a means of liberating not only women but also children. For what were the tots learning at home except that it was a place of female enslavement?

My mother's tenure as a working woman was short-lived. We spent a year overseas while my father was on sabbatical—requiring my mother to give up the best job of the lot—and by the

POPPIES

Waking from comalike sleep, I saw the poppies,
with their limp necks and unregimented beauty.
Pause, I thought, say something true: it was night,
I wanted to kiss your lips, which remained supple,
but all the water in them had been replaced
with embalming compound. So I was angry.
I loved the poppies, with their wide-open faces,
how they carried themselves, beckoning to me,
instead of pushing away. The way in and the way out
are the same, essentially: emotions disrupting thought,
proximity to God, the pain of separation.
I loved the poppies, with their effortless existence,
like grief and fate, but tempered and formalized.
Your hair was black and curly; I combed it.

—*Henri Cole*

time we returned he had reinvented himself as a successful novelist, a surprising turn of events that energized and occupied them both. She was happy to accompany him on book tours and at publishing events, a combination of glamorous literary wife and girl Friday. But I always guiltily assumed that it was at least in part my whining and balking that was responsible for her giving up. She and I were exceedingly close—"enmeshed" is the term now in vogue—and although I was the only one in the household who hated my mother's job, I was also the only one who really understood what it meant to her. Like most marriages, hers traded interludes of excitement with long stretches of tedious overfamiliarity. As an adult, I have often thought of how much better off my mother would have been if she'd had a job—money of her own, power of her own—as she faced the hard times.

Thirty years later, the notion of a woman's being blindsided by the stultification of housekeeping is positively quaint—upper-middle-class women have been so thoroughly indoctrinated about the politics of housework that we can hardly scrape a dish without fuming about the inequitable distribution of domestic labor within a marriage. What surprises successive waves of women is how difficult it is to conduct family life along recognizably bourgeois lines and also maintain a career. It's even harder today than it was in my mother's era, because the modern professional-class mother is not pursuing the kind of women's work for which my mother and her friends had been trained, and to which they eventually returned: nursing and elementary-school teaching and secretarial work and the like. Those were posts that could be abandoned and returned to without a significant loss of stature, and were usually predictable in terms of hours and workload.

Today's career moms are often trying to make partner or become regional sales manager or executive editor, jobs that require a tremendous number of hours and a willingness to allow urgent appeals, via Blackberry or cell phone, to interrupt even the best-laid plans for family time. And all the while, not giving an inch, there are the women who have chosen to stay home. They've forfeited the power and autonomy of work for one reason: to insure that their children get the very best of them. And, in a hundred different ways, at-home mothers are eager to remind working mothers that they're not quite measuring up.

To call these tensions a preoccupation among the mothers I know would be to commit a grave act of understatement. Last year, I went to a fund-raiser for the Los Angeles nursery school that my twin sons attended. It was a dinner dance with an auction, and the signal items up for bid were chairs hand-painted by the members of each class, a project that had been laboriously created and supervised by an exceedingly earnest and energetic at-home mother. She was at the podium, a little flustered and flush with pride about the furniture, the decorating of which she was describing in effusive terms. Leaning against a far column watching her, with drinks in their hands and sardonic half smiles on their faces, were two of my friends: a lawyer and a movie producer. I was propelled toward them the way I was once propelled toward the cool girls in high school. And I suddenly had the bona fides to join them: my writing had recently begun to be published. We looked at the woman—think of all she'd sacrificed to stay home with her children, think of the time she'd spent dipping our own children's hands in paint so that they could press their little prints on the miniature Adirondack chairs. "Get a life," one of us said, and we all laughed and drank some more. And then we turned our backs on the auction and talked about work.

But I'm craven enough to change colors if the occasion calls for it. "Is that poor child's mother *ever* at school?" someone hissed when a (perfectly happy) little girl marched off with her nanny one recent afternoon. "I've never seen her," I clucked back, feeling guilty about knifing the absent mother and glad as hell that I hadn't sent my own nanny to pick up the boys that day.

When my children were born, six years ago, there was no question where I stood on all of this: I was certain that it was better for children—much better—if their mothers stayed home with them, and that is exactly what I did. It was a mixed experience. The emotion I felt gazing down into their bassinets was akin to romantic fervor, but I'm a woman who likes ideas and good jokes, and the poor little babies didn't seem to know any. The three of us were invited to plenty of places—to a twins-only playgroup, to a regular meeting of mothers in the park—but at the crucial moment of departure one of the boys would nod off into a sound sleep, or they would both become transfixed by the branches scraping against the living-room windows, a turn of events that only a fool would fail to recognize as a sign from God that it was time to make a nice cup of tea and have a chat on the telephone. (It was my friends from work whom I wanted to talk to, not the mothers in the park.) Slowly, the invitations dried up, and I became one of those lonely, out-of-synch mothers patrolling the streets with my enormous stroller at odd hours, ransacking my library of baby-care books for signs of lagging development or rare medical syndromes. People began to worry about me. My mother called and gently suggested that I go back to work, a remark that (needless to say) infuriated me on several levels. I wasn't going anywhere: if the last gasp of my youth was to be spent sitting on a lawn chair in a tiny back yard watching the little boys poke at things with sticks, so be it. There was only one thing about motherhood of which I was certain: these early years of my sons' lives would one day constitute my happiest memories. I was also certain that there would be a big payoff for the kids. The starting bell of the academic decathlon was about to ring: nursery school (carefully chosen, highly regarded) was around the corner. There, I naïvely assumed, the children would fall into two easily recognizable camps: the wan and neurotic kids of working mothers and the emotionally hardy, confident kids of stay-at-home moms. What a bust. There was no difference at all that I could divine—if anything, the kids of the working mothers seemed a little more on the ball. My boys (who had been slavishly catered to by besotted late-life parents) would drop their sweaters and toys on the playground and forget they existed, while their friends whose mothers worked took care of their own things, putting sweaters in cubbies, keeping track of toys and shoes. Many of the children of the working mothers marched into the classroom without a backward glance; they were used to not having their mothers beside them. They looked ready to take over the world.

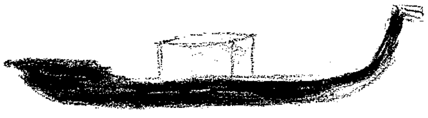
In the end, what did my boys gain from those thousand days they spent with me before school took them out into the larger world? Nothing, it seems to me, of any quantifiable value—no head start in life assuring them some prize that forever eludes the children of working mothers. All they gained was an immersion in the most powerful force on earth: mother love. And perhaps there is something of worth in that alone.

Support for this opinion was readily at hand in my mother's kitchen, in the Cardinal edition of Dr. Spock. He addresses the issue of the working mother in a dire final section called "Special Problems," for in those unreconstructed days having a working mother landed you in the same luckless category as the premature baby and the handicapped child. Spock, though, was an exceptionally decent man, quick to soothe the wounds his early opinions caused. Indeed, the sixth edition of "Baby and Child Care" (which I was given when I had my children) puts the topic of combining work and family right up front, in Chapter 1, and aims it as much at Dad as at Mom. (The chapter also addresses such with-it concepts as "Men need liberating, too" and "The subordination of women is brought about by countless small acts.") But I'm not so quick to dismiss his earlier thoughts on the subject. As I read them now, in the crumbling pages of my mother's book, I find them politically radical, morally compelling, and honest.

"Some mothers *have* to work to make a living," he begins, reasonably. "It doesn't make sense to let mothers go to work making dresses in factories or tapping typewriters in offices, and have them pay other people to do a poorer job of raising their children." His solution? The government should "pay a comfortable allowance to all mothers (of young children) who would otherwise be compelled to work."

Of mothers who work for more complicated reasons, at more exalted jobs, he says this: "A few mothers, particularly those with professional training, feel they have to work because they wouldn't be happy otherwise. I wouldn't disagree if a mother felt strongly about it, provided she had an ideal arrangement for her children's care. After all, an unhappy mother can't bring up very happy children."

And then he identifies a third type: "What about the mothers who don't absolutely have to work but would prefer to, either to supplement the family income, or because they think they will be more satisfied themselves and therefore get along better at home?" His answer to this question has angered many women, but it proceeds from nothing more malevolent than absolute respect for the maternal bond: "The important thing for a mother to realize is that the younger the child the more necessary it is for him to have a steady, loving person taking care of him. In most cases, the mother is the best one to give him this feeling of 'belonging,' safely and surely. She doesn't quit on the job, she doesn't turn against him, she isn't indifferent to him. . . . If a mother realizes clearly how vital this kind of care is to a small child, it may make it easier for her to decide that the extra money she might earn, or the satisfaction she might receive from an outside job, is not so important after all."



What Spock could not have predicted was how many women would fall into his second category. Mothers with professional training are thick on the ground these days, and their desire to work is at once more complex and more profound than Spock imagined. A woman with an education and a desire to take part in the business of the world—someone who wants a public life even a thousandth as vital and exciting as Spock's—may not be uniquely suited to the simple routines of child care. In fact, the life of the nursery can handily diminish what is most hard-fought-for in a person. It isn't simply a matter of "extra money" or "satisfaction." For many women, the choice amounts to the terrible prospect of either relinquishing a measure of influence over their children or abandoning—to some extent—the work they love. For them, this will always be the stuff of grinding anxiety and regret.

My mother died the way Mike lost his money in "The Sun Also Rises": very slowly and then all at once. I had been with her two weeks before, and any fool could have seen that she was near the end. But she was my mother; I thought she was going to live forever.

In the modern way, my family had a memorial service instead of a funeral. There had been heavy rain on the terrible day in the hospital, but the day of the memorial was glorious. An overflow crowd sat on wooden folding chairs in my parents' garden and ate lunch. Then everyone pressed into the living room for the speeches. People remembered the countless dinner parties my mother had thrown over the years, and also the encouragement she had given with her famous pep talks and cheery phone calls, the excursions she would plan if anybody was feeling low. Sitting on her writing desk in a corner, unnoticed and unremarked upon, was her old nursing-school portrait, which had been taken in a photographer's studio more than half a century earlier, and which she had paid for with her very first wages. ♦

BEST BOOKS
From the First 5 Years

THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America
by Eric Larson,
(Vintage, $14.95, Trade Paper, 0375725601)
"This is a thrilling look at Chicago during the 1893 World's Fair told via two storylines: the building of the fair and the story of a vicious serial killer who preys on the young women who attend the event. Reading groups will enjoy both the juxtaposition of the two stories and the fascinating look at a place in time told from such different points of view."—**Sue Boucher, Lake Forest Book Store, Lake Forest, IL**

PEACE LIKE A RIVER
by Leif Enger
(Atlantic Monthly Press, $13, Trade Paper, 0802139256)
"What a book! I was captivated from page one. His pitch-perfect prose is a pleasure to read, and his imaginative storytelling took me through the whole range of human emotion. *Peace Like a River* deserves a huge audience, it's that good. We continue to enjoy the delightful task of finding a readership for this really extraordinary (and really fun) novel."—**Mark LaFramboise, Politics and Prose Bookstore, Washington, DC**

SEABISCUIT
by Laura Hillenbrand
(Ballantine, $15.95, Trade Paper, 0449005615)
"Hillenbrand gifts us with an incredible history of a time, a place, and an entire culture. Like other great books about a storm, a ship, an adventure, the legendary racehorse is a wonderful inspiration for Hillenbrand's larger story … though even if it were just the horse, it would be enough. A great adventure told by a writer worthy of the task."—**Laura Snyder, Lucy's Books, Astoria, OR**

ATONEMENT,
by Ian McEwan
(Anchor, $14, Trade Paper, 038572179X)

EMPIRE FALLS,
by Richard Russo
(Knopf, $14.95, Trade Paper, 0375726403)

NICKEL AND DIMED: On (Not) Getting By in America,
by Barbara Ehrenreich
(Owl Books, $13, Trade Paper, 0805063897)

BEL CANTO,
by Ann Patchett
(Perennial, $13.95, Trade Paper, 0060934417)

FAST FOOD NATION: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal,
by Eric Schlosser
(Perennial, $13.95, Trade Paper, 0060938455)

THE POISONWOOD BIBLE,
by Barbara Kingsolver
(Perennial, $15, Trade Paper, 0060930535)

THE DA VINCI CODE,
by Dan Brown
(Doubleday, $24.95, Hardcover, 0385504209

LIFE OF PI,
by Yann Martel
(Harcourt, $14, Trade Paper, 0156027321)

THE RED TENT,
by Anita Diamant
(Picador, $13, Trade Paper, 0312195516)

DON'T LET'S GO TO THE DOGS TONIGHT: An African Childhood,
by Alexandra Fuller
(Random House, $13.95, Trade Paper, 0375758992)

THE LOVELY BONES,
by Alice Sebold
(Back Bay Books, $13.95, Trade Paper, 0316168815)

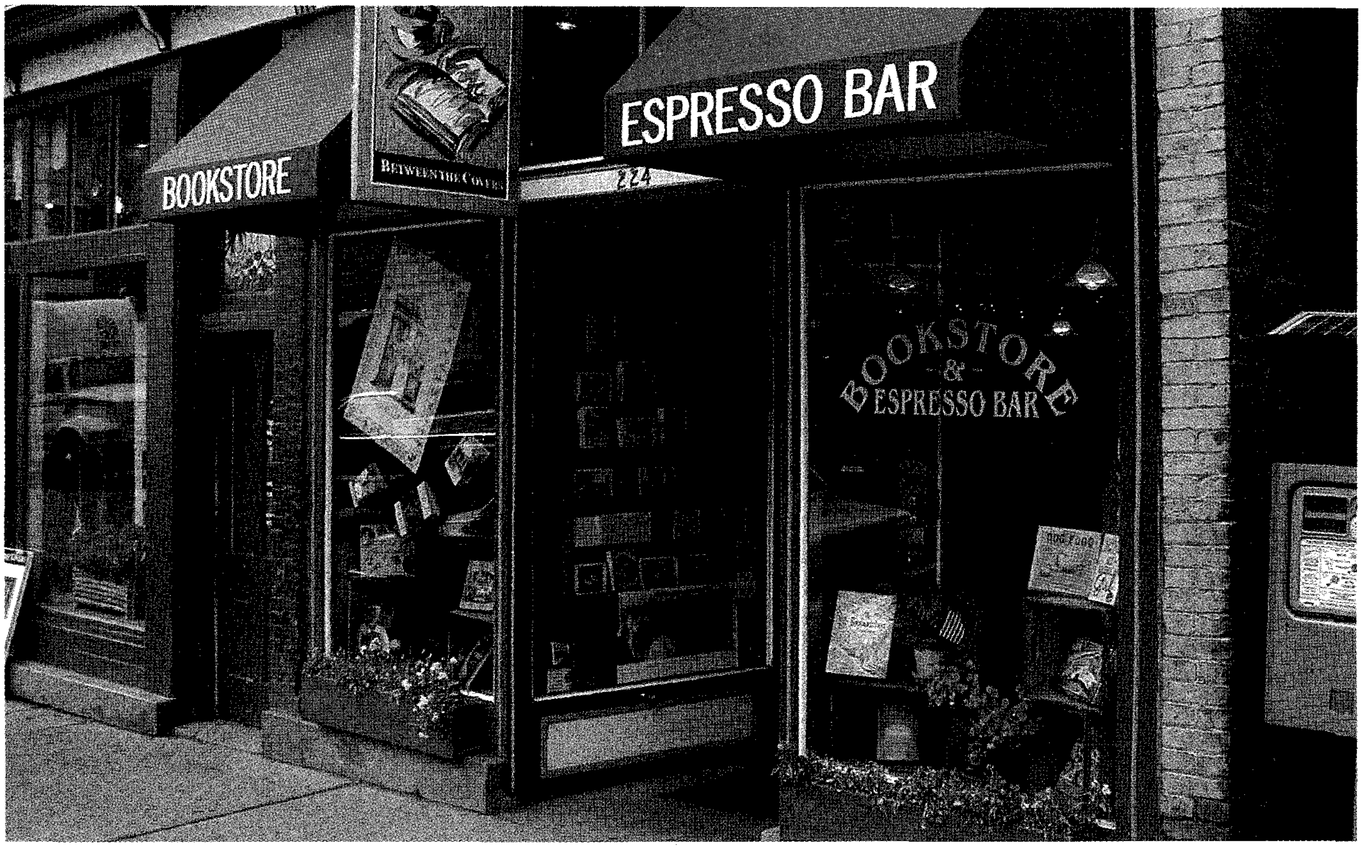
THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES,
by Sue Monk Kidd
(Penguin, $14, Trade Paper, 0142001740)

Celebrating 5 Years! BOOK sense

Book Sense is a nationwide network of 1,200+ independent bookstores working together to bring knowledge, passion, character, personality, and community to your book-buying experience. Find book suggestions, store locations, and more at www.booksense.com, or call 1-888-BOOKSENSE for a store near you.

Get the full Book Sense Picks list at independent bookstores now.

For an independent bookstore near you, call 1-888-BOOKSENSE or visit BookSense.com.



Book Sensibility

CELEBRATING THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF BOOK SENSE

By Douglas Chilcott

The moment you set foot inside, you know it. The bookshop with the Book Sense logo in the window is wonderfully different in so many ways.

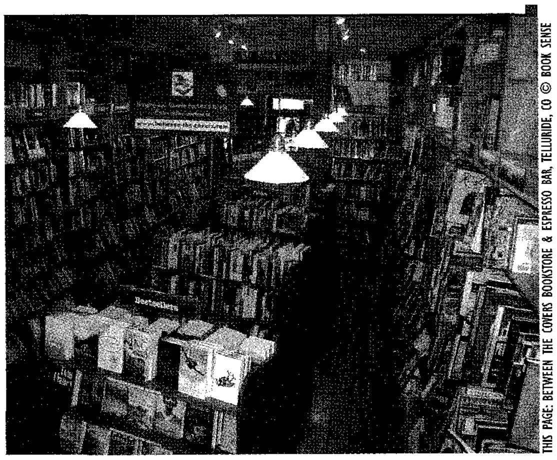
Neatly stacked books arranged in cozy nooks reflect the informed choices of seasoned independent booksellers. Runaway best sellers share shelf space with books of undiscovered brilliance—many destined to defy the odds and find an appreciative audience nationwide. By their very presence, independent booksellers are responsible for building community. Local residents gather for intimate book-club chats and noted authors stop by for readings and signings.

Writers—though they may richly interact with a diverse cast of virtual characters—toil in relative solitude. When they do emerge into the glare of publicity on book tours, they savor the sanctuary offered by independent bookstores in towns across America. Basking in the friendly welcomes they receive, authors marvel at the ability of small bookstores to create a national literary sensation just by influencing one customer at a time.

THE HEART OF TOWN

The distinctive personality and warm ambience of local independent bookstores distinguish them from other places where books are sold. And, as America's increasingly jaded consumers seek more authenticity in everything they do, a trip to a beloved local bookstore can be richly rewarding. Spreading the word on the virtues and benefits of such a visit to readers across the country is the stated mission of Book Sense.

Celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, Book Sense originally emerged out of the need to form a collective voice for the thousands of independent booksellers facing strong competition nationwide. Yet, while the Book Sense voice was collective, the components of that voice, like a symphony, would retain the unique elements of each



THIS PAGE: BETWEEN THE COVERS BOOKSTORE & ESPRESSO BAR, TELLURIDE, CO © BOOK SENSE individual store. For no independent bookstore is quite like any other; each boasts its own personality and inspires its own unique feeling of surprise and serendipity.

RAVE REVIEWS

Every spring at BookExpo America (BEA), the country's major book publishing conference, hundreds of booksellers, publishers, and authors gather for a luncheon that honors the books that have been nominated for coveted Book Sense prizes. For a convention not short on parties and fêtes, this luncheon has grown into one of the hottest tickets at the annual gathering. It provides more than just an opportunity for booksellers to rub elbows with authors whose faces grace the latest book jackets, or for authors to meet booksellers who have supported their books in the past. The spirit that fills the room exemplifies the fond place held by independent bookstores in the country's imagination. It's a moving forum where authors get to share their thoughts and acknowledge the vital role that independents have played in getting their books into the hearts and minds of readers everywhere.

> “When it comes to matching people to books, independent booksellers are the masters.”

At last month's BEA luncheon, Sue Monk Kidd, award-winning author of “The Secret Life of Bees,” thanked booksellers for supporting her novel, selected as one of Book Sense's “Best Books From the First 5 Years.” She acknowledged that while she owed her success to a number of people, independent booksellers are at the top of her list. “It was clear from the beginning,” she said, “just how hard they worked to handsell my book.”

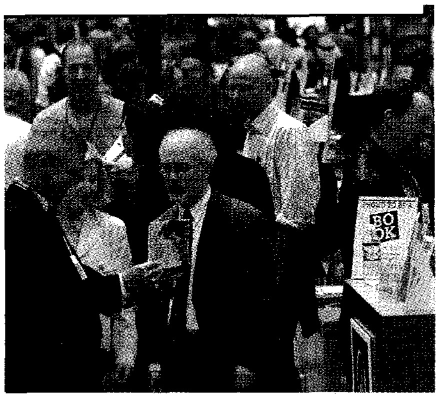
Mark Teague, whose “Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters From Obedience School” won a Book Sense Best Book nod in the children's illustrated book category, bestowed similar kudos. “Booksellers have really embraced my work over the past many years, and I'm very appreciative. When independent booksellers get behind a title,” he said, “it makes all the difference in the world.”

Also on hand at the event, Daniel Handler, a.k.a. Lemony Snicket, and the author of another title honored as one of the “Best Books From the First 5 Years,” shared his own impressions about the Book Sense program: “What appeals to me about it is that it combines all bookstores into a phalanx of intelligence and integrity.”

STACKING UP

Spreading the word on important new titles is one of the abiding passions of independent booksellers. When it comes to matching people to books—the so-called art of handselling—independent booksellers are the masters. The popular Book Sense Picks list, which can be accessed at the Book Sense website and at the organization's member bookstores, gathers the insightful recommendations of independent booksellers across the country.

To celebrate this year's fifth anniversary, independent booksellers were polled for their choice of “best books published in the past five years” in the categories of fiction, nonfiction, and children's books. A quick scan of their picks reveals the special alchemy demonstrated by independent booksellers. Like an inventory from one of the world's greatest libraries, the titles include a perfect mix of page-turning best sellers, prizewinning fiction; quirky, unforgettable yarns for both young and old, and groundbreaking historical biographies. If this literary fare is what's now on the minds of Americans, we can thank independent booksellers for getting us all thinking. ■



To learn more about about Book Sense, review the “Best Books From the First 5 Years” list, or to find an independent bookstore in your area, visit www.BookSense.com.

Wiley
MANGA REVOLUTION
PENGUIN
VISIT

BOOKEXPO AMERICA IMAGES COURTESY OF BEA

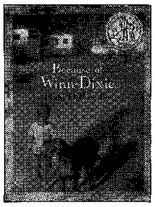
BEST BOOKS

From the First 5 Years

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS: THE BAD BEGINNING

Lemony Snicket,
(HarperCollins, $10.99,
Hardcover, 0064407667)

"Mr. Snicket faithfully provides exemplary vocabulary lessons, all the while chronicling the misfortunes of the Baudelaire orphans, who, despite misery upon misery heaped upon them by the dim and the vile, persist in their unwavering good-naturedness."
—Melissa Mytinger, Cody's, Berkeley, CA



BECAUSE OF WINN DIXIE

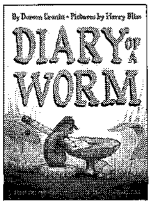
Kate DiCamillo,
(Candlewick, $5.99,
Paperback, 0763616052)

"India Opal is one of the strongest, most sensitive and sensible heroines since Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Kate DiCamillo's first novel is a marvel. Not to be missed!"**—Collette Morgan, Wild Rumpus, Minneapolis, MN**

DEAR MRS. LARUE: Letters from Obedience School

Mark Teague,
(Scholastic, $15.99,
Hardcover, 0439206634)

"Kids who know what it's like to be 'trapped' at summer camp will love the skewed letters from the 'poor' dog forced to attend school. Shades of Allan Sherman and 'Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah'!"
—**Amy Nina Baum, Red Balloon Bookshop, St. Paul, MN**



DIARY OF A WORM

Doreen Cronin, illustrated by Harry Bliss,
(Joanna Cotler Books/HarperCollins, $15.99,
Hardcover, 006050150X)

"The world from a worm's point of view will tickle the funny bone of the picture book generation. Teachers will love sharing this book and using it as an incentive for young writers. A perfect introduction to journal writing."**—Judy Hamil, Children's Corner Bookshop, Spokane, WA**

ERAGON: The Inheritance, Book I

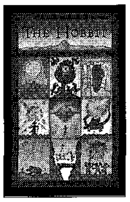
Christopher Paolini,
(Knopf, $18.95,
Hardcover, 0375826688)

"*Eragon* is a guaranteed hit for any reader who loves fantasy. Drawing on the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien, Anne McCaffrey, Ursula K. Le Guin, Philip Pullman, and other great fantasists, Christopher Paolini has woven together an exciting suspense-filled adventure of one young man coming of age in partnership with the first dragon born in over a century. I can't wait to read the rest of the trilogy."**—Peter Glassman, Books of Wonder, New York, NY**

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Philip Pullman,
(Laurel Leaf, $6.99,
Paperback, 0440238137)

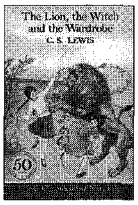
"Demanding repeated readings, this is a full and rich fantasy novel that becomes a first step in a journey through faith, love, and life itself. It's beautifully written and fun to boot. I catch myself gasping with surprise and true suspense."
—Jean Riescher Westcott, Olsson's Books & Records, Arlington, VA



THE HOBBIT

J. R. R. Tolkien,
(Houghton Mifflin, $10,
Paperback, 061815082X)

"Tolkien's admirable body of work introduced generations of readers to fantasy. Many of those readers started with the story of the unassuming Bilbo Baggins, Hobbit of the Shire. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo has an unexpected party with a wizard and thirteen dwarves, travels across half of Middle Earth, befriends elves and giant eagles, clashes with trolls and goblins and wolves (oh, my), finds a magic ring, and has a battle of wits with a dragon under the mountain. There and back again, our small hero handles every hazardous situation with aplomb, while hardly ever missing a meal."
—**Patrick Heffernan & Maryelizabeth Hart, Mysterious Galaxy, San Diego, CA**



THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

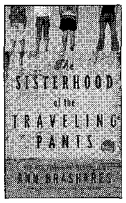
C. S. Lewis,
(HarperCollins, $8.99,
Paperback, 0064409422)

"This book introduces the possibilities of a parallel universe where siblings could actually work together to fend off evil, mistakes could be forgiven and the world could have a fresh start. The Pevensie kids literally stumble through an old wardrobe and into a world where they are the long-awaited 'sons of Adam and daughters of Eve' prophesized to save Narnia. They successfully depose the White Witch and put the great lion Aslan back in power. Have you checked the back of your wardrobe lately?**—Collette Morgan, Wild Rumpus, Minneapolis, MN**

OLIVIA

Ian Falconer,
(Atheneum/Simon & Schuster, $16.95,
Hardcover, 0689829531)

"This is such an endearingly original picture book. In deceptively simple drawings, with splashes of red as the only color, the author/illustrator has created a piglet to charm the heart of every reader. Most parents will see their child, and most children will see themselves in *Olivia*. This is very likely another porcine classic."
—**Leslie Reiner, Inkwood Books, Tampa, FL**



THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS

Ann Brashares,
(Laurel Leaf, $6.99,
Paperback, 0440229707)

"The only thing four 15-year-old girlfriends have to connect them throughout a long summer apart is a pair of $3.49 thrift store jeans—jeans that miraculously fit each girl perfectly. The magic traveling pants will be sent to each girl twice, in the hopes that the girl wearing the pants will have an incredible adventure, make lasting memories, and remember the power of love and friendship."
—**Nikki Mutch, UConn Co-op, Storrs, CT**

Celebrating 5 Years!
BOOK sense

Book Sense is a nationwide network of 1,200+ independent bookstores working together to bring knowledge, passion, character, personality, and community to your book-buying experience. Find book suggestions, store locations, and more at www.booksense.com, or call 1-888-BOOKSENSE for a store near you.

Get the full Book Sense Picks list at independent bookstores now.

For an independent bookstore near you, call 1-888-BOOKSENSE or visit BookSense.com.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

A PRAYER

BY PAUL SIMMS

Lord?

Please don't let me die in a funny way.

Like being beaten to death with a shoe. Especially not my own shoe. And, if it absolutely has to be my own shoe, I'd rather not be wearing it at the time.

Or like choking on my own fist during a bar bet.

Perhaps I should clarify a little. I do know that I'm going to die someday. (Maybe soon! That's Your call.) And I know there's nothing funny about death—at least, that's the current thinking from this side. I'm just asking to not die in a way that leads people who don't know me to e-mail one another news items about my death. For instance:

Please don't let me get so fat that paramedics have to come to my house and cut out a wall to remove me but then bang my head against a load-bearing pillar in the process, thus killing me.

Please don't let me die on or near or—perhaps worst of all—because of a toilet. (This includes a urinal or a baseball-stadium-style urine trough, in addition to a standard commode.)

Please don't let my death in any way involve one of those giant inflatable rats that union protesters put up outside non-union job sites. Or a blimp of any kind. Until I see some evidence to the contrary, I'm going to have to say that my dying because of just about anything inflatable would be something I'd rather avoid. A hot-air balloon, I guess, would be O.K., but only if I'm actually in the balloon at the time. At least that would be kind of rugged and outdoorsy. What I'm trying to say is: if someone else's hot-air balloon falls out of the sky and smothers me while I'm lying in a hammock reading *Hot Air Balloon Enthusiast* magazine, I'm going to be a little pissed.

I apologize for that language, Lord, but I'm just trying to be honest with You.

A vehicular accident? Fine. Bring it on. I understand that, statistically, there's a pretty good chance of that happening anyway. Just please don't let it involve a moped. Or a go-kart.

Also, I'd prefer not to die in a head-on collision with someone who—against all odds—has the same name as me. Or anyone named, for instance, Roger Crash. Or Ed Oncollision. Or Jennifer Safedriver. I could go on, but I think You get the point.

I'm sure You get this one a lot, but: please don't let me die during sex. Unless the technical cause of my death is a heart attack or a stroke. If I have to die during sex, please don't make the cause of death any of the following: extreme dehydration, a previously undiagnosed allergy to fruit-scented or "massage" oils, dermatological complications arising from severe rug burn, or anything involving the use or misuse of any object best described as "foreign."

Please don't let me die in a way that allows the *Post* to run a small item about my death on page 12 or 13 or so under the headline "DUDE, WHERE'S MY CORPSE?" Or "DUMB AND DEADER." Or "DEAD AND DEADER." Or "THE HOUSE OF SAND AND DEAD." Or "J. LO'S LATEST NUPTIALS POSTPONED DUE TO LETHAL TENT-RAISING MISHAP."

Please don't let me cut my own head off while trying to revive the lost Scouting pastime of mumblety-peg.

I would have to consider any fatality involving a prolapsed anus, of course, absolutely beyond the pale. I mean, come on, Lord.

Also—and I'm not trying to split hairs with You, Lord—when I ask You to not let me die in a funny way, I also mean please don't let me die in a noteworthily ironic way. Meaning: whether my death is "ha-ha" funny or the other kind of funny, neither of those is what I'm in the market for. For instance, please don't let me go on a Sleepwalkers Anonymous Outward Bound-type retreat and sleepwalk into a canyon or gorge in the middle of the night.

And, if You deem it necessary (or just amusing) to take my mind before You take my body, let's try to keep the progressive dementia noble and epically sad rather than comical. For example: please let the last face I recognize be the photograph of a long-lost high-school girlfriend and not one of the plucky toddlers from the animated show "Rugrats." In my final moments, let me awaken—apparently lucid—in the pre-dawn hours calling out for a kiss on the forehead from a dead great-aunt rather than from the mustachioed black bartender on "The Love Boat."

Or from the actor who played him, for that matter.

Even if I don't die in a funny way, I'd still rather not die on the same day as some other person who does die in a funny way. Because I don't want any version of the following conversation to occur between my friends:

Friend One: Did you read his obituary?
Friend Two: Yeah. Nice piece.
Friend One: Very nice.
Friend Two: He would have liked it.
Friend One: That he would have. That he would have.
(Awkward silence.)
Friend Two: Did you see that other obituary about the banana wholesaler who actually slipped on the—
Friend One: Yeah. You couldn't make that up!

Well, that's about it, Lord.

Actually—as long as I've got You, let me just mention a few final ways for me to die that may or may not seem funny to You, depending on Your sense of humor.

I would rather be burned beyond all recognition than burned *almost* beyond all recognition, especially if the pictures are going to end up on the Internet.

If some kind of rare organism eats away at my body from the inside, please let it be microscopic. Or just slightly larger than microscopic. Let's put it this way: if it's big enough to have a face, that would be too big.

Thank You for Your time, Lord.

(Also: Ted Lange. That's the name of the actor who played the bartender on "The Love Boat" whose name I couldn't remember before. I Googled him for You, Lord. Which has got to count for something, right?) ♦

THE
NEW YORKER
ONLINE

newyorker.com

THIS WEEK'S
WEB EXCLUSIVE
Katherine Boo talks about the human face of outsourcing in India, with an expanded portfolio of photographs by Samantha Appleton.

An archive of hundreds of past Web exclusives, including Q. & A.s, cover galleries, slide shows, Web sightings, and more.

A decade of New Yorker Film Notes.

A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

LETTER FROM FALLUJA

HOME RULE

A dangerous excursion into the heart of the Sunni opposition.

BY NIR ROSEN

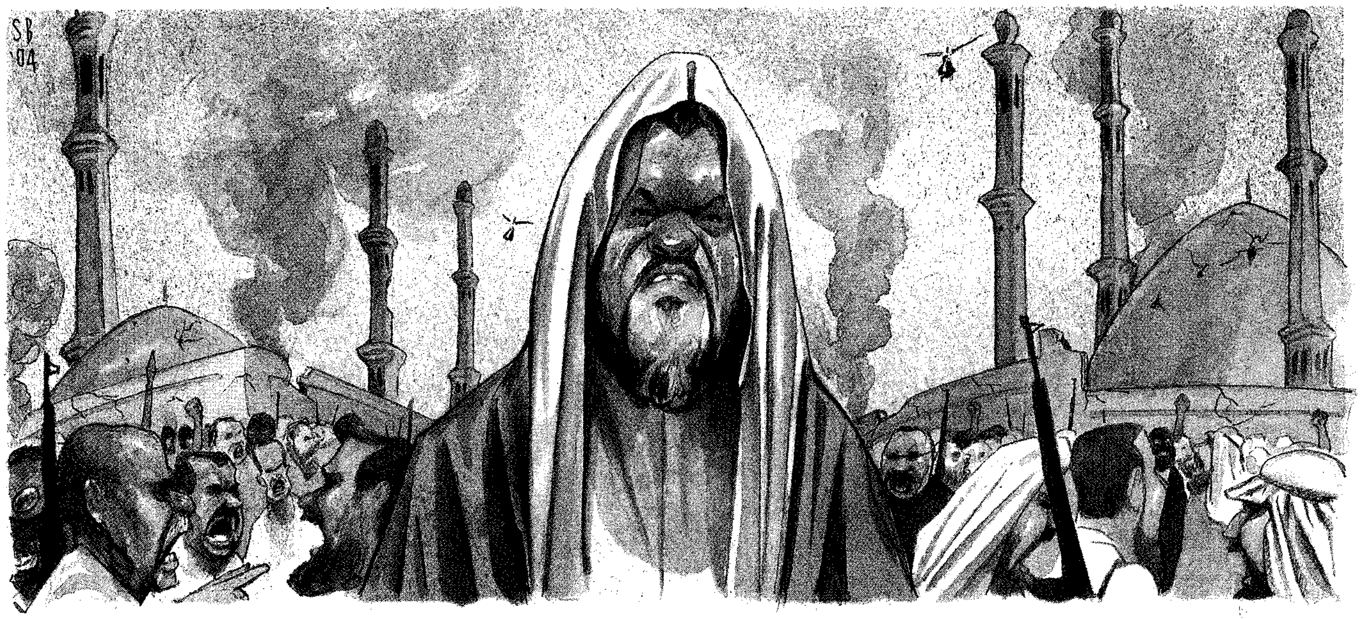
On May 11th, the day after the United States Marines withdrew from the streets of Falluja, about five hundred clerics, tribal leaders, businessmen, and military and police officers gathered in the dusty courtyard in front of the wide stone stairs that lead to the entrance of Rahma Hospital. The hospital is under construction, and during the Americans' siege of the city, which lasted for most of April, it served as a storehouse for weapons, medical and food supplies, and sandbags. A rough lectern had been placed halfway up the stairs, and was flanked by flags and banners inscribed with phrases extolling the martyrs of the siege. The dignitaries sat in white plastic chairs under a big tent that shaded them from the midday sun, clapping politely and drinking from cans of soda and bottles of water, while poets read work they had prepared for the occasion. Several of the poets were from other cities in Iraq, including Najaf, and a recurrent theme that afternoon was the bond between Sunnis and Shiites. Falluja is one of the most religiously conservative towns in the "Sunni triangle," but the recent confluence of the Shiite uprising led by Moqtada al-Sadr and the siege of Falluja by the Marines had created a curious alliance that transcended religious differences. A local poet recited a poem called "The Falluja Tragedy." His accent made his words barely intelligible, at least to me, but I could make out these phrases: "Falluja is a tall date palm. She never accepts anybody touching her dates. She will shoot arrows into the eyes of those who try to taste her. This is Falluja, your bride, O Euphrates! She will never fall in love with anyone but you. . . . Americans dug in the ground and pulled out the roots of the date palm."

A young boy from Najaf wearing a pressed white shirt tucked neatly into bluejeans walked up to the lectern, and the microphone was lowered to accommodate him. The boy raised his right arm, pointing his index finger at the sky. "I came to praise the heroes of Falluja!" he shouted. His poem ended with calls to God—"*Ya Allah! Ya Allah!*"—that he screamed out. Then he began to sob, and he was led away, wiping his tears. The men in the front row of plastic chairs embraced and kissed him, and he returned to the lectern and recited another poem. This time, he brandished a Kalashnikov that was as long as he was tall.

The most distinguished guest in the tent was Sheikh Dhafer al-Obeidi, a man in his late thirties with narrow eyes and a thick black beard. He sat regally in the front row, wearing a white scarf and a translucent gold-rimmed cape that he had draped over his shoulders. Falluja's most powerful cleric, Sheikh Abdullah al-Janabi, had recently given Sheikh Dhafer day-to-day authority over the city. Sheikh Dhafer was the last speaker. He described the event as "the wedding day for Falluja." Muslims had not felt such joy, he said, since Saladin liberated Jerusalem in the twelfth century.

The Marines' farewell visit to Falluja the previous day had been billed as a joint patrol with a new Iraqi security force, the Falluja Brigade. It was a hasty affair, lasting only about half an hour, and something of an anticlimax to Operation Vigilant Resolve, the attack on the city launched on April 5th by the First Marine Expeditionary Force after the killing and mutilation of four Blackwater security guards. Hospital officials in Falluja say that at least six hundred Iraqis died during the subsequent siege.

The American withdrawal was a controversial experiment in Iraqi autonomy. Falluja was the only city in Iraq that was surrendered to a local military force with strong connections to the previous regime. This was, essentially, a reversal of the policy that had been in effect since the previous April, when U.S. Army troops arrived in Falluja, two weeks after they took Baghdad, thirty-five miles to the east. But Falluja was a far different place now than it had been a year ago. In the first few months after Saddam's government fell, the city had been fairly stable internally. Religious and tribal leaders had appointed their own civil management council before the Americans arrived. Falluja did not suffer from looting, and government buildings were protected. Tight tribal bonds helped maintain order. Early in the occupation, however, a demonstration protesting the Americans' takeover of a school building had turned bloody, and a cycle of attacks and retaliation began, with the resistance increasing in sophistication. Local fighters were joined by rogue mujahideen and jihadis from other Arab countries, and, as in the rest of Iraq, the violence and disorder spiralled out of control.



Traditional tribal authorities in Falluja, led by Sheikh Dhafer al-Obeidi, began to lose control of the city during the fighting.

STEVE BRODNER

The accord between the Americans and the resistance was brokered by the Marines, members of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and several groups of Iraqis, not all of them with the same agenda, although there were basic areas of agreement. "Many people came in asking to be intermediaries," a member of the C.P.A., who asked to remain anonymous, told me. "We wanted the individuals who had killed the contractors, and we wanted heavy weapons turned in, and we needed to be able to move inside and outside the city. They wanted the hospital opened and the old bridge cleared and the curfew changed so they could make it to evening prayers in the mosque. And we discussed what to do about foreign fighters, or 'Arab guests,' as they called them."

The men who killed the contractors were not turned in, and very few weapons were surrendered, but the Americans agreed to a deal nonetheless. The fact that the Falluja Brigade included several former Baathists and radical Sunni fighters whom the Marines had recently been battling was considered a small price to pay for peace. Power had been turned over to local authorities who had legitimacy. And the Marines claimed that they were still in control. A Coalition press release noted that "Fallujans reportedly waved to them"—the marines—"as they made their way in and out of the city" on May 10th. This was apparently a reference to the thousands of residents who came into the streets to celebrate. Fighters in the backs of pickup trucks shot weapons into the air, songs were sung, and a sheep was slaughtered. An Iraqi officer wearing the uniform of the old Republican Guard handed out forms to men who had lined up to join the Falluja Brigade.

The four Blackwater security guards were killed at a large intersection on Falluja's main street. It was once called Habbaniya Street, but the name was changed to Sheikh Ahmed Yassin Street in March, after the Israelis assassinated Yassin, the co-founder of Hamas. When I was there in May, laborers with scarves protecting their faces from dust stood around, waiting to be picked up for day jobs. Anti-American graffiti was scrawled in English on the walls of nearby buildings. Young boys who sold bananas and Kleenex were acting as an early-warning system for the city. I knew several people who had been spotted by them. The laborers, who were armed with shovels, pipes, and pickaxes, were on hand to enforce street justice.

The boys gathered around me and the laborers removed their kaffiyehs from their faces to talk. Several of them said that they had witnessed the attack, and they described how two S.U.V.s had stopped at a red light and mujahideen had opened fire on them from other vehicles. A mujahid had shouted, "I avenged my brother who was killed by the Americans!" and the assailants left. The gruesome scene of the mob mutilating the bodies, burning them and beating them until they were partially dismembered, was captured on film by local cameramen. (There is a term for this kind of thing. In Iraqi dialect, the Arabic word *sahl*, which literally means dragging a body down the street, has grown to mean any sort of public massacre.) The images were broadcast over and over again on Arab and Western television.

In the Jolan neighborhood, on the northwest edge of town, near the bridge where the charred bodies of two of the Blackwater security guards were strung up, people were sorting through the rubble of their homes. One man stood in the center of an immense crater while his children played on a pile of bricks that had once made up their house. Several men asked me to photograph the damage, and as I was doing so a white sedan pulled up and two men whose faces were covered with checkered scarves demanded to know who I was. They were worried about spies, they said. Mujahideen paranoia was making it impossible for Western journalists to work in Falluja. I was able to avoid being taken hostage or killed because I speak Arabic and have olive skin and black hair and, when asked, I said that I was Bosnian. I didn't carry my American passport into Falluja. More important, I was travelling with a Palestinian who had helped the resistance leaders during the fighting. This reassured the men in the white sedan.

Several people in Jolan said that the foreign fighters—Saudis, Tunisians, Moroccans, Yemenis, and Lebanese, directed by Syrian militants—had been crucial to the defense of the neighborhood. The groups of mujahideen who hung around mosques included men who looked to me like Arabs from the Gulf. Most of them were dark, with angular features, and they had long, well-groomed beards. Their dishdashas were short, in the Wahhabi style, ending a little below their knees. Friends of mine who had been held by mujahideen told me they had heard men speaking with accents from the Gulf, Syria, and North Africa.

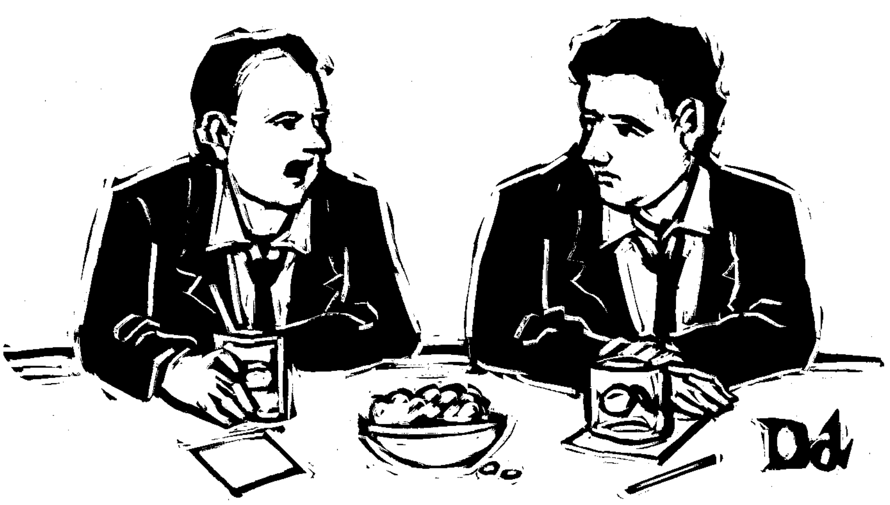
The foreign mujahideen still in Jolan imposed strict Islamic codes of behavior on the neighborhood. They harassed Iraqis who smoked cigarettes or drank water using their left hand, which is considered impure. They banned alcohol, Western films, makeup, hairdressers, "behaving like women"—i.e., homosexuality—and even dominoes in the coffeehouses. Men found publicly drunk had been flogged, and I was told of a dozen men who had been beaten and imprisoned for selling drugs.

The Nazal neighborhood, in the southern part of the city, had also been a battleground during the siege, and I met a former brigadier general in the Iraqi Army, Abu Muhammad, there. We sat in the guest hall of his grand house, watching the news on television while his three young sons wrestled on the sofa. Abu Muhammad had lost his job when Paul Bremer dissolved the Army. When the war ended, he said, "we expected things to improve, but everything became worse: electricity, water, sewage." Speakers in the mosques began to talk openly about jihad. "This attracted foreign Arabs who felt constrained by their own regimes," Abu Muhammad said, "and of course there were neighboring countries that supported them. Nobody in Falluja opposed the resistance, and many different resistance groups came in. Weapons were very available. The Baath Party had distributed weapons, and after the fall of Saddam's government soldiers and security personnel took their weapons home. People here grow up with weapons. They are part of our personality."

When the siege of Falluja started, in early April, Abu Muhammad said, "people here were monitoring American movements and had the upper hand. They had military experience, and they prepared themselves for the fight." Highway 10, the road that connects Baghdad to Jordan and the western part of the country, runs through Falluja, and it was virtually shut down. Fighters set up roadblocks and searched cars for foreigners, military convoys were attacked, and trucks were hijacked and robbed. Abu Muhammad said that Al Jazeera's coverage of the siege incited sympathy for the resistance. He compared the Al Jazeera correspondent to a sports commentator: "He encouraged people to support one team against the other. And he raised the spirits of fighters." Abu Muhammad was not optimistic about the future of Falluja. "It's like Afghanistan, where gangs rule, and Mafias and Taliban," he said. "If they decide somebody is a spy, they will kill him. There is no legal procedure. Imams who left during the fighting were prevented from returning to their mosques." He feared that differences between mujahideen groups would lead to further violence.

Several councils, committees, political parties, and religious organizations were competing for influence in Falluja, among them the local branch of the Association of Muslim Scholars, one of the most powerful Sunni organizations in the country. It is led by Harith al-Dhari, who is both a religious and a tribal leader and has been vociferous in his opposition to the American occupation. The Association of Muslim Scholars, which is based in the Abdel-Aziz Al Samarrai mosque, had its own mujahideen units during the fighting. The mosque's green dome was dotted with bullet holes and there was a big hole in the tower.

The Association of Muslim Scholars' main competition is the Iraqi Islamic Party, which has offices in an old theatre across from the central market in Falluja. The Party dominates the town council, but its members were not active during the fighting, and some even left

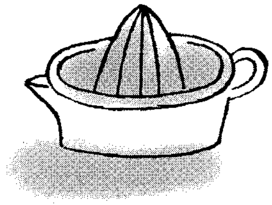


"Do you dwell on the wasted years behind you or the terrifying years ahead?"

the city, earning the contempt of many Fallujans. Another organization, the forty-five-member Falluja Provisional Authority Council, was concerned mostly with negotiating with the Americans about the reconstruction of the city. Its headquarters, on Falluja’s main street, was surrounded by huge concrete security barriers covered with resistance posters.

By far the most important seat of authority in town is the Al Hadhra Al Muhammadiya mosque, led by Sheikh Dhafer. Falluja is known as *medinat al-masajid*, the city of mosques, of which it has at least eighty, and the Hadhra is small and faded compared to others. It is, nonetheless, the city’s de-facto command-and-control center. An informal committee of religious, tribal, and political leaders based in the mosque confers on strategy and advises the mayor and the town council. During the fighting in April, the loudspeaker in the mosque’s tower broadcast bulletins encouraging resistance, disseminating news, and giving directions to fighters about which front they should report to. I bought several DVDs in Falluja that showed fighters armed with Kalashnikovs, sniper rifles, and rocket-propelled grenades congregating inside the mosque and loading supplies into pickup trucks parked in front of it. DVDs of this sort are used for recruitment purposes by the mujahideen, and they have soundtracks that, typically, begin with turgid chants mourning the victims of the occupation forces, accompanied by pictures of bleeding and dead Iraqi children. Then the music becomes more reggae-like, and there are images of mujahideen firing mortars or exploding roadside bombs beneath American vehicles. One DVD showed heavy machine guns, pistols, grenades, satellite phones, walkie-talkies, video-rental cards, an airline itinerary printed from a Hotmail account, and plane tickets—all spread out on the carpet of someone’s *diwan*, or guest room. The booty was identified as having been taken from the vehicles of the four slain Blackwater guards.

Sheikh Dhafer’s many powers include the giving or withholding of clearances for journalists to work in the city, and I had to get a piece of paper from him that allowed me to move about. Journalists who had not done so ended up being held by armed gangs. The rusted gate in front of the Hadhra mosque was covered with announcements, including one from the *qaimmaqamiya* (an old Ottoman word for town hall) that gave instructions about what documents were necessary to apply for compensation for martyrs, wounded people, and damaged vehicles. A tall palm tree provided a bit of shade on a path to the mosque office, where I removed my shoes and left them by the door. The office was sparsely furnished, and I sat on an old sofa and drank a glass of water and ate some candies that an attendant thrust at me. There were several representatives of Sheikh Dhafer in the office, and visitors streamed in. Each man who entered the room said, “*As-salamu aleikum*,” or “Peace be upon you,” and everyone stood up and answered, “*Wa aleikum salam*,” or “And upon you peace.” We would then shake hands and greet each other in the western-Iraqi way: a kiss on the cheek followed by three kisses on the shoulder. A twelve-year-old boy named Saad was introduced as an intrepid sniper. He was hugged and kissed and congratulated for being a *batal*, a hero. Saad smiled proudly. He had a hoarse, adult voice and was insolent to the older, bigger boys in the room.

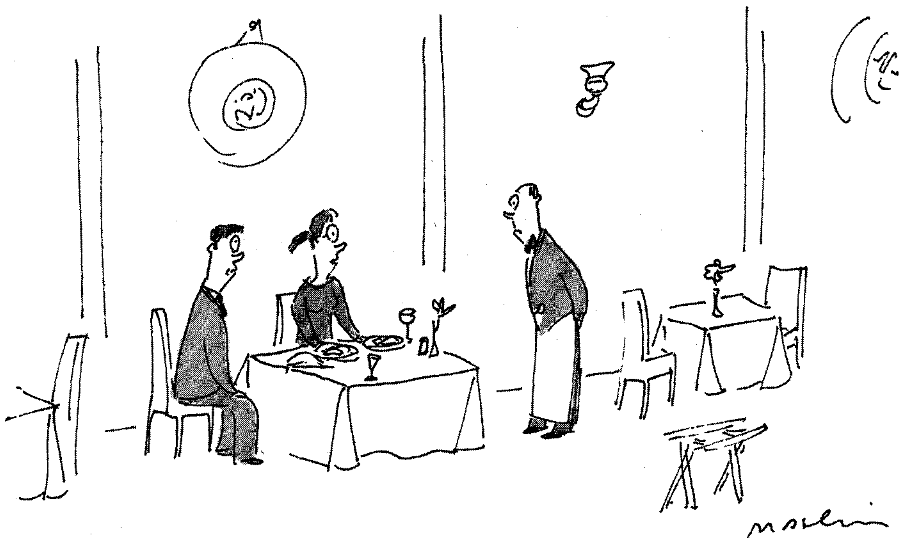


Major General Jassim Muhammad Saleh, the former Iraqi Army officer who was appointed to head the Falluja Brigade when the accord with the Americans was reached, came by, looking elegant in a white dishdasha and a white scarf. He exchanged greetings with the guests in the increasingly crowded office, and briefed them on the latest political events, barking gruffly in clipped military style, his jowls shaking, as he fingered yellow prayer beads. General Saleh is a well-connected member of an important family in Falluja, and he had made a dramatic show of taking over the city at the end of April, but he turned out to have been an unfortunate choice from the American point of view. Rumors soon spread that he was a member of Saddam’s Republican Guard and had been involved in crushing the Kurdish and Shiite uprising that erupted early in 1991, after the first Gulf War. He was soon replaced by Muhammad Latif, a former Army officer who had been jailed by Saddam. Latif wasn’t from Falluja, and he continued to live in Baghdad, but his shortcomings in terms of local credibility were offset by the fact that he didn’t look like a reconstituted Baathist. My Palestinian guide, among others, said that Latif was just a figurehead, although American military officials and reporters, to whom he liked to give interviews in his garden in Baghdad, portrayed him as a forceful leader. Saleh, meanwhile, conferred often with Sheikh Dhafer and the other authorities in the Hadhra mosque.

Sheikh Dhafer, in addition to being the imam of the mosque, was now also the director of Falluja’s *amana al-ulia lifta*, the high council for fatwas, which was formed after Saddam’s government fell. The fatwa council is based in Baghdad and is led by a radical Sufi cleric. When I asked Dhafer if he was the real leader of the city, he smiled disingenuously. “I am just a simple man who lived through the suffering of Falluja,” he said. I told him I had heard that he was the architect of the victory over the Americans, and he grinned proudly but whispered, “Don’t mention that, for my security.”

At Friday prayers that week, the mosque was overflowing, and I took one of the prayer mats that had been spread outside. Sheikh Dhafer’s raspy, high-pitched voice came over loudspeakers. Following convention, his sermon began with a general discussion of religion, but it soon became political. “Everybody hates America now because of the policies of President Bush, and his own people condemn him, so what can we not do?” he asked. “What can we not say? What are the limits of our response?” Dhafer then turned to the subject of unruly mujahideen. “It’s a shame that people who claim they are mujahideen set up checkpoints and steal cars and kidnap people,” he said. “They do what the Americans do, forcing people to lie on the ground, spreading their legs. What religion is this?” Dhafer urged the mujahideen to be more pious.

After the noon prayer and sermon ended, I was inundated by invitations to lunch, and joined a businessman with connections to the mujahideen. The men



"We can't possibly finish our argument—can we take it home?"

of his family lined up at the entrance of their *diwan* to shake hands and welcome visitors. A plastic mat was spread on the floor and bowls of rice and meat were set out, surrounded by smaller bowls of sliced vegetables and chicken. Round bread was piled on the mat's edge. We all sat cross-legged on the floor, and a spoon and a plate were ordered for the Western guest, out of respect for his presumed inability to eat with his hands directly from the bowls, like a civilized person. When I finally plunged my fist into the greasy rice, tearing shreds of meat and stuffing it into my mouth, the men exclaimed with pleasure. Thin glasses were brought out, nearly half-filled with sugar and dark tea. The room echoed with the sharp tinkling of spoons mixing the sugar, and we watched the American attacks on Najaf and Karbala on Al Jazeera.

My hosts showed me a leaflet that was circulating throughout the region. A blurry photocollage depicted a giant, spiderlike creature next to a pair of legs that belonged to a man in an American military uniform. The leaflet explained that the creature circles around Falluja, attacking Americans. It could run up to forty kilometres, screaming and biting. I had heard numerous fantastic stories like that. One told of a Kalashnikov that worked for four hours straight without reloading. An armory used by the mujahideen turned into a weapons cornucopia. Dead mujahideen were said to smell pleasantly of musk. "Unnatural things happened," I was told over and over.

On May 27th, my Palestinian guide told me that three NBC journalists had been taken hostage in Falluja, and we drove over from Baghdad the next morning. By then, the NBC crew had been released, and marines were eying the city warily from behind two barricades and vehicles covered with camouflage netting. Several dozen members of the Falluja Brigade, police, and civilians crowded around the entrance to the Hadhra mosque. I asked a guard I recognized to tell me what was going on, and he said that two "spies" had been arrested: "They're British or maybe German."

Taghlub al-Alusi, a gentle old man, tall and dignified, with sharp lines on his face, who was the administrator of the mosque, was in Sheikh Dhafer's office with several other men. He was looking more worried than usual. A woman was sitting in a corner of the room, in front of a table covered with Styrofoam containers of food. She was very white, and young. Her face was swollen and her shirt had speckles of blood on it. A pale, tall, middle-aged man emerged from the bathroom and sat next to her. His face was spotted with red bruises, and he winced when he moved. His hands were trembling. Taghlub and another man were examining two German passports, turning them around and squinting at every page. The chief of police was seated across the table from the Germans, a chicken leg in his hand. His sixteen-year-old son, who wore a pistol on one side of his waist and a walkie-talkie on the other, was next to him, opposite a short, round man with layers of tape covering his nose. A baby-faced man in a tailored suit sat next to the man with the bandage. He was the mayor, and he was rehearsing a statement.

The German man was Uwe Sauermann, a fifty-five-year-old freelance journalist. The woman was his twenty-four-year-old assistant, Manya Schöche. They had driven to Falluja that morning after being warned not to go to Najaf because it was too dangerous. Sauermann had taken his hotel manager's advice and put on a dishdasha as they entered town, but someone saw his face when their car was stopped at the intersection where the four contractors had been killed, and they were seized by six armed men, one of whom wore a policeman's uniform, and accused of being an American general and a female soldier. A mob beat them with shovels, sticks, and rocks. Their translator, a Christian from Baghdad, who wore a cross, was hit in the back of the neck with a machete and his nose was broken. He was the short man with the tape on his nose.

Just as the Germans and their translator were about to be doused with gasoline, someone had pulled Sauermann into a car and put a plastic bag over his head, and—after more violence, during which a police car was destroyed—he and the other two hostages were brought to the Hadhra mosque, which was soon surrounded by men carrying RPGs and Kalashnikovs. Sheikh Dhafer, General Saleh, and Muhammad Latif, the putative head of the Falluja Brigade, were inside, but they thought the situation was becoming too volatile, and they left. The mosque's "committee for the investigation of espionage" established that Sauermann and Schöche were indeed German journalists, and Abu Abdullah, a foreign mujahideen leader who marched in demanding the return of what he referred to as American spies, was rebuffed.

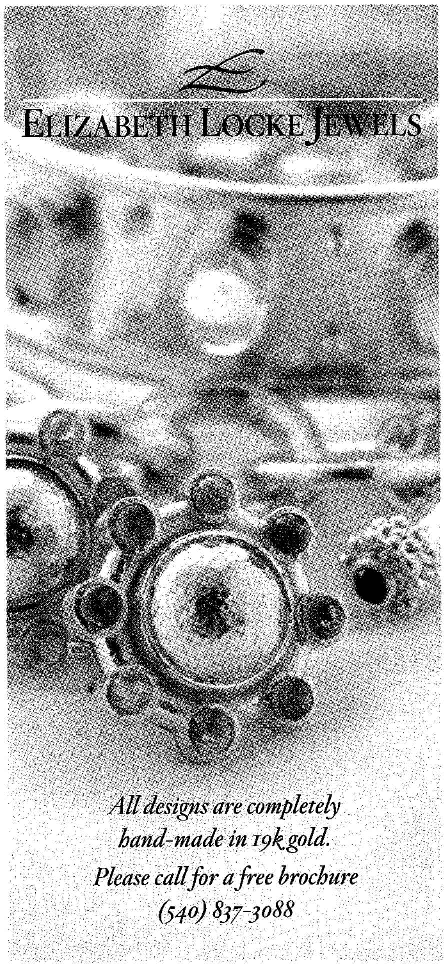
The translator, who came over and sat next to me, kept dabbing at his nose, wiping blood away, and when the mayor told him to eat he said, in a nasal voice, "I can't—I'll throw up." Sauermann and Schöche were taken into an office where local stringers for Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya were preparing to film the mayor's statement. They were seated on a sofa on either side of the mayor, who faced a camera and explained that it had all been a misunderstanding that could have been avoided if the Germans had checked in with his office in the first place. Sauermann was told that he could make a statement. "When I saw the pictures of American attacks on Falluja, I decided to come here," he said in English, with a thick German accent. "Somebody shouted 'Americaner! Americaner!' and then people came and you know what happened next. Men with guns put a bag on my head like the Americans do." He said that he was a friend of the Iraqi people. The mayor shook Sauermann's hand and told him to recant his statement comparing the behavior of the mob to that of the Americans. "When I said they used a plastic bag, it didn't mean that we have to compare the people of Falluja to the Americans," Sauermann said. "I only meant that the plastic bag itself reminded me of the Americans."

Saad, the young sniper, who was serving refreshments, asked me if Schöche was Sauermann's daughter. He didn't understand how a woman could be travelling with a man not related to her. "Just give me five minutes alone with her," he said, with a wistful smile.

Sauermann and Schöche were loaded into the mayor's car, and about twenty members of the Falluja Brigade, in pickup trucks, accompanied them to the edge of town. The mayor, the police chief, and several aides and guards continued on to Baghdad, to the German embassy, a fortresslike place in the posh Mansour neighborhood. The mayor and the police chief went inside with the former captives, and I waited outside, chatting with two of the mayor's assistants. They were worried about the political situation in Falluja. The foreign fighters and rogue mujahideen didn't respect the authority of Sheikh Dhafer and the counsellors attached to the Hadhra mosque. They didn't answer to Falluja's tribal and religious establishment, and they had the muscle to do as they liked. The mayor's assistants feared that Sheikh Dhafer and his colleagues could lose control of the town.

I went back to Falluja once more before I sensed that I was pressing my luck. On May 28th, the day the Germans were released, Sheikh Janabi, who in addition to being the senior cleric was the head of the Mujahideen Advisory Council, an ad-hoc group established to control the fighters in the city, had warned in his Friday sermon that any member of the foreign press who entered Falluja would be killed. Two weeks later, the bodies of six Shiite truck drivers who had been carrying supplies to the Falluja Brigade were discovered in the neighboring town of Ramadi. The truck drivers' families claimed that they had been brutally murdered at the behest of Sheikh Janabi, although he denied having anything to do with it. Then the Pentagon announced that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was using Falluja as his headquarters, directing the assassins and suicide bombers who were turning the handover of Iraqi sovereignty into a bloodbath, and American aircraft bombed a house in Falluja that was alleged to be a Zarqawi safe house. At least twenty people were killed. On June 22nd, Kim Sun Il, a Korean translator who had been captured near Falluja, was beheaded, and a car and a garage in the Jubail neighborhood were hit by American rockets. Fighting broke out between the marines and resistance forces, and there was more bombing.

Speakers at a street demonstration in Falluja denied that Zarqawi was in the city. One of them, a young cleric, said that they did not need Zarqawi's help. "The people of Falluja have men that love death the way the infidels love life!" he shouted. Sheikh Janabi said that the United States was using Zarqawi as a pretext to attack Iraqis, just as it had once used weapons of mass destruction. In any case, the airstrikes indicated that the Americans had pretty much abandoned the idea that the Falluja Brigade could do serious policework among resistance fighters, and certainly not among suspected terrorists. There were even reports that brigade members had joined the resistance when the new fighting broke out. As the handover to sovereignty began, the experiment with self-rule in Falluja looked more and more like a desperate measure that had been taken too late. ♦



ELIZABETH LOCKE JEWELS

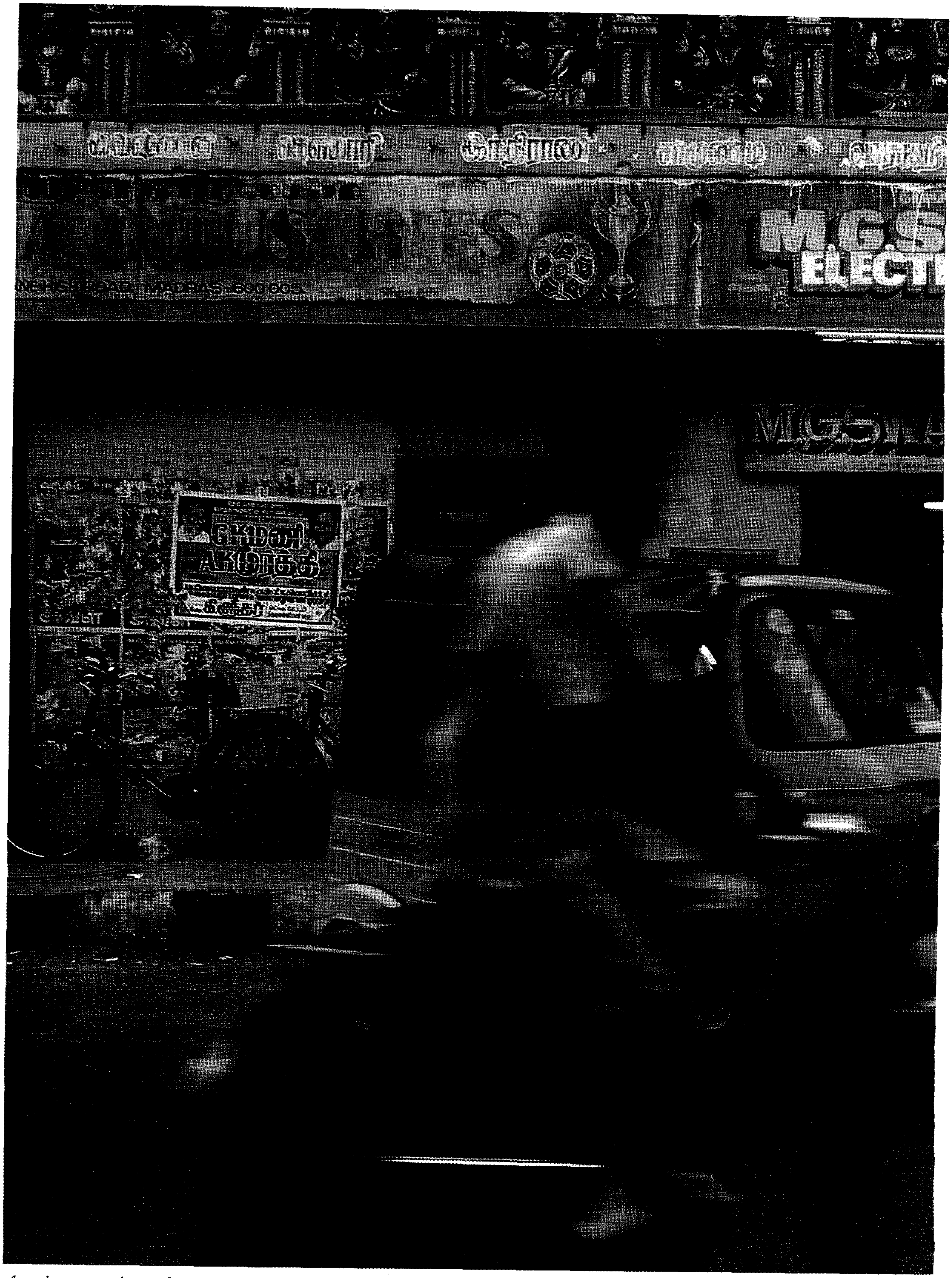
All designs are completely hand-made in 19k gold.
Please call for a free brochure
(540) 837-3088

BODY TIME®
Est. 1970
FORMERLY THE ORIGINAL BODY SHOP, BERKELEY, CA
CALL TO ORDER: 1-888-649-2639
Try the Original China Rain—Free!
GO TO: www.bodytime.com/newyorker

solid cherry bedsteads
built to last
212.620.4682
137 Varick NYC
www.scottjordan.com
SCOTT JORDAN FURNITURE

Stone Soup
the magazine by young writers and artists
The Literary
Magazine by Children
A perfect gift to inspire creativity
$34/yr (6 issues) · 800-447-4569
www.stonesoup.com
"The *New Yorker* of the 8-13 set"-Ms.

French & Italian Holiday Rentals
Live like a European in your own chateau, villa or farmhouse. Weekly rentals. Most regions.
Call (510)559-8080 or write
2124 Kittredge St, #200, Berkeley, CA 94704
www.villeetvillage.com
VILLE ET VILLAGE®


MADRAS 600 005
M.G.S
ELECT

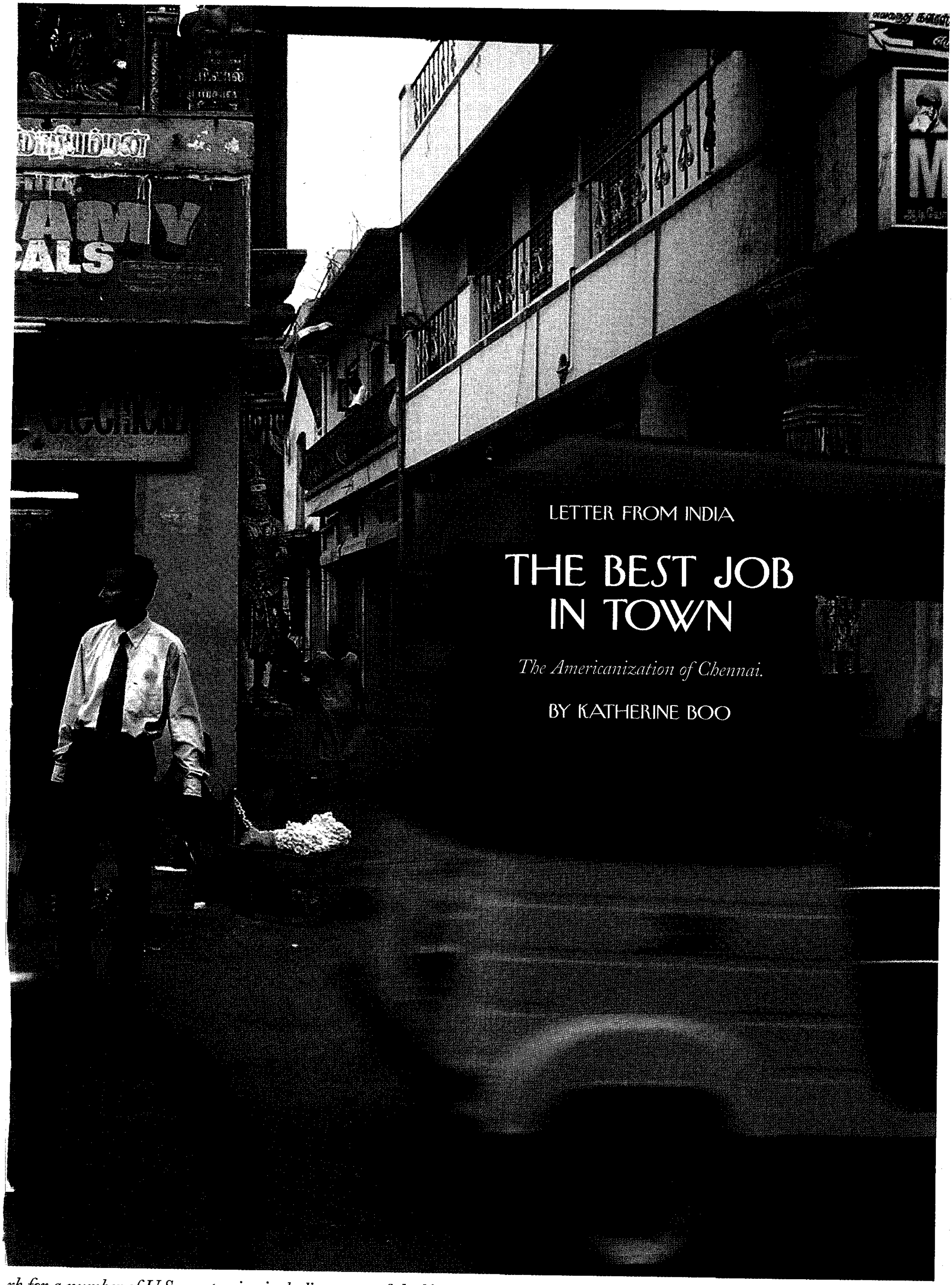
American uneasiness about outsourcing has made Chennai a secretive city. Harish Kumar is an employee of Office Tiger, which do

LETTER FROM INDIA

THE BEST JOB IN TOWN

The Americanization of Chennai.

BY KATHERINE BOO



rk for a number of U.S. companies, including some of the biggest banks on Wall Street. Photograph by Samantha Appleton.

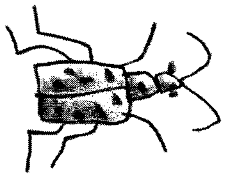
One Monday this spring, a forty-three-year-old salesclerk at the Home Depot in Plano, Texas, scribbled some updates onto an old résumé and took it to his local copy shop. To his education and work history—a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering and technology, service in the U.S. Marine Corps—he added a recent moonlighting job as a handyman and a new "career objective." Ten minutes later, in southern India, a middle-aged Hindu man in a cavernous workplace began to type the Home Depot clerk's words. A prevailing fiction in the Indian office was that the dozens of "document specialists" doing American work didn't actually register the content of the résumés, funeral programs, pro-se lawsuits, and erotic manifestos sent to them over broadband from store counters with "While-U-Wait" signs. Rather, the document specialists were to type, format, proofread, and zap things back while maintaining an exquisite blankness of mind. But American résumés, as much as American erotica, caused an inconvenient upwelling of emotion. "To secure a position at a company that would utilize my skills and provide an opportunity for advancement": row upon row of typing Indians recognized the Plano clerk's yearning as their own.

The typists were new, entry-level employees at a prominent firm in the sprawling coastal city of Chennai—still "wet behind the ears," as Americans would say, or so they'd been informed during a company crash course on Western ways. Their narrow cubicles were lodged on the sixth floor of a pink stucco building whose lobby possessed, in addition to a purposeless set of turnstiles and a statue of the Hindu god Ganesh, solid evidence that even plastic rhododendrons will wilt in extreme heat. Most of the workers had been born in Chennai and would, in all likelihood, die there. Still, from their workstations they could imagine, not unreasonably, that they were seeing a bit of the world. Their employer, a company named Office Tiger, did the work not just of an American copy-shop chain but of seven of the twelve biggest banks on Wall Street—confidential labor carried out in unmarked rooms with film-covered windows, closed-circuit cameras, and electronic security so unforgiving that as the typist finished the résumé from Plano three bankers, accidentally locked in a nearby room, were frantically pounding on a door. Office Tiger also performed work for a Big Four accounting agency, several white-shoe Northeastern law firms, an insurance conglomerate, two large publishing concerns, a Madison Avenue advertising agency, global management consultancies, and other enterprises whose identities were not divulged to workers of the résumé-typing rank.

The document specialists, all college graduates, earned roughly a tenth of what they would have commanded for this work in the U.S., and less, too, than they would have been paid in some call centers. But it was the possibility that one could rise up from a lowly position that had made Office Tiger one of the city's status employers, a firm whose workers were so pleased by their affiliation that they put it on their wedding invitations, just below their fathers' names. A foreign notion—that jobs should be distributed on the basis of merit—was amending the rules of a society where employment had for millennia been allotted by caste, and great possibilities abounded. A clerk who today did a bang-up job of formatting the work history of a part-time handyman in Plano might be an adjunct investment banker by year's end.

Chennai, the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu, was at one time an agglomeration of fishing hamlets near the Bay of Bengal—a mile-wide spit of sand upon which seventeenth-century British traders imposed the name Madras. As the imperialists built forts and seaside promenades, the less refined aspects of colonialism sharpened the Tamil-speaking locals' preference for their indigenous culture. This now vast community—the fourth-largest city in India, after Delhi, Mumbai, and Calcutta—was, until recently, a willfully anti-cosmopolitan place. If the Calcuttan post-colonial ideal was outward-looking, intellectual, and romantic, like the heroes of Satyajit Ray films, Chennaians rated hard work over lofty thought, science over poetizing, and humility over everything else. Though most Chennai residents were Hindu, violence against the city's Muslim minority was relatively rare. Discord between rich and poor was similarly muted—perhaps because the city's élites tended to leave ostentation to the peacocks, which (along with goats, water buffalo, auto-rickshaws, roosters, and homeless families) beautified the roadsides.

For centuries, the Western world knew this city, if at all, through a group of unpresumptuous tradesmen: weavers who rendered the colorful, comfortable madras plaid that has long outfitted the gentries of Cornwall and Nantucket. This "better cheape" cloth, as one seventeenth-century British trader described it, provided the city with an economic base until the late twentieth century, when tariffs and global competition brought many power looms to a standstill. Some former weavers earned renown for a more macabre kind of trading: as one of the international black market's primary sources of human kidneys. Other citizens, though, turned to more renewable resources for economic survival. Capitalizing on their celebrated work ethic, on a dozen practical-minded local universities, and on the ability of the élites to speak, in addition to Tamil, the clipped and elegant English of their colonizers, Chennaians developed the sort of forward-looking economy that many of America's post-manufacturing cities still struggle to achieve. "Better cheape" Western business is Chennai's new niche.



Schoolgirls here maintain a picturesque ancient tradition—entwining their braids, morning and night, with fragrant jasmine flower. The perfume is particularly welcome lately, as constant road construction, unprecedented automotive pollution, and a three-year drought have created a stench that the vanilla candles in the new wi-fi coffeehouses cannot mask. Flower fields have given way to steel-and-glass buildings, which, despite continuous exposure to sun in one of the world's least temperate climates, have become a status essential. The glass in these office towers is blue and black and silver, and its impenetrability seems at first to be a consequence of the city's blinding sun. The refraction is partly by design. American uneasiness about outsourcing—an issue in the current Presidential campaign—has turned Chennai into a secretive city, where the

"Drinking is just part of what I do."

• •

American back-office presence, everywhere felt, is almost nowhere stated. Although American companies with Picassos in their foyers and Corbusier chairs in reception still dispatch work to South Asia office buildings fronted by beggars and spavined cattle, the company names have been deleted from phone books, Web sites, and corporate entryways. The American International School in Chennai, which serves children of American executives and diplomats, recently doubled in size. It wears no sign on its gate.

The British were drawn to India as a physical place: a repository of precious raw materials from which the natives might be parted, and a locus of beauty and mystique. The new American attachment is not physical but conceptual—the lure of cheap, smart, pliable labor. Among Chennai's janitors and security guards, as well as its bankers, the need for discretion about that labor is understood. Even the ephemera of the United States offshoring debate becomes front-page news here; many of Chennai's young professionals now know the names John Kerry, Lou Dobbs, Benedict Arnold, and Timothy Platt—the latter the proprietor of a U. S.-based Web site called yourjobisgoingtoindia.com, which is as closely followed in Chennai as it is in Silicon Valley. Fascination with the American controversy is more bemused than fearful. Chennaians in general believe that what they call "outsource hoopla" has already redounded to their favor, alerting a wider audience of executives and stockholders to the benefits of wage arbitrage.

Some American companies, such as Ford, have been manufacturing in the region for years, working to capture a piece of a potentially vast consumer market. But now non-factory, professional employment is surging. Among the white-collar options available to Chennai's college graduates are work for Verizon, Bank of America, Hewlett-Packard, Citibank, Visa, MasterCard, and Electronic Data Systems, a Plano-based tech company founded by the free-trade opponent Ross Perot, which recently announced a layoff of fifty-two hundred U.S. employees.

One indicator of Chennai's new corporate mass is the recently opened Park Hotel, where a glass of Chablis costs nearly as much as the monthly salary of the low-caste busboy who spirits away the empties. Situated near a faded mural of Mahatma Gandhi, bare-chested and bent into his walking stick, the hotel features Texas barbecue, "appletinis," and, to ease executive stress, poolside chaises in cabanas. One spring evening, a tense Indian doing Harley-Davidson work sat in one such cabana, promising his ten-year-old daughter, whom he was "raising by cell phone," that on his day off he would take her to a theme park called M.G.M. Dizzee World. The initials M.G.M. are for the park's founder, M. G. Muthu, who made his first fortune introducing the city's growing middle class to American-style installment plans. Now he is educating working parents about expensive American antidotes to guilt—roller coasters and Seven Dwarfs-like characters resembling incarnations of Vishnu.

The Americanization of Chennai has been so swift and—save inside the Park Hotel—so quiet that many of its citizens do not yet grasp the change in their cultural and literal landscape. An animation company makes cartoons seen by American children on Saturday mornings. Radiologists read American MRIs, clerks adjudicate patients' insurance claims, and programmers automate Medicaid eligibility for an entire Midwestern state. Chartered accountants complete U.S. tax returns while underwriters certify U.S. mortgages. And within Office Tiger's pink building aspiring financiers analyze American firms that are ripe for corporate takeover in a place they call Wall Street East.

One afternoon in late March, Office Tiger's wiry thirty-three-year-old co-C.E.O. stood at his desk, surrounded by luggage, receiving from Manhattan the news that his firm had just landed Wall Street investment bank No. 8—a half-a-million-dollar "starter" contract. "There are a few liability issues still outstanding, but basically we're good to go," an underling on a speakerphone said. She anticipated a doubling of the contract within the year. "The only tricky thing is that we've got to get the employees hired and ready in three weeks." "Three weeks," the C.E.O. repeated; he was pleased but also harried. Executives of a Fortune 10 company would be descending on the office the following day, but he had decided he would have to miss the visit: officials of a Fortune 5 company were awaiting him the same morning in Bangalore, a thirty-five-minute plane ride away.

The co-C.E.O. is Joseph Sigelman; the other co-C.E.O. is Randy Altschuler, also thirty-three. Their enterprise, Office Tiger, is named not for the fauna of the East but for the mascot of Princeton University, where they met in the cafeteria their freshman year and became best friends. Joe and Randy, middle-class boys

"You think you hate me now, but just wait until I'm old and a burden to you."

• •

who had attended, respectively, St. Ann's in Brooklyn and Manhattan's Hunter College High School, were the kind of Princetonians who sought entrée into student government, not the eating clubs. They shared abstemiousness and obsessive work habits (if you dined most nights on applesauce that you kept in your dorm room, you saved money and gained an extra hour to invest in your medieval-history paper) that since college days have become a selling point.

After Harvard Business School and jobs at Lazard Frères, Goldman Sachs, Deutsche Bank, and the Blackstone Group, in 1998 the friends gave up a combined annual income of half a million dollars and the experience of hearing Paris doormen say, "Welcome back to the Ritz, Mr. Sigelman," in order to pursue an idea born in a late-night fit of pique. It had become apparent to them that not every typist and copyist working the midnight shift in their investment banks—the moonlighting actor, the artist with the ring in his nose—was putting his heart, soul, and syntactical memory into completing the PowerPoint presentations that needed to be done, perfectly, by morning. Randy began to speculate that workers overseas might invest more care in the menial jobs that Manhattanites seemed not to relish. Joe, who had been introduced to Madras on a family vacation when he was twelve, thought that some of its underemployed citizens might be grateful indeed. "You met people in factories or running the elevator who had the intelligence and spirit to do so much more," he remembered. "We thought, why not release that talent?"

The Indian government gave them a ten-year "tax holiday." American and British venture capitalists gave them seventeen million dollars for the startup, only a sliver of which they had to spend on labor. (Tamil Nadu's per-capita income equates to thirty-six U.S. dollars a month.) Their first "office" was a sheet-metal shed. Former business-school classmates gossiped that Joe and Randy had cracked from the stress of investment-banking and run off to an ashram. Initially, ashram life would have rendered a better return. "We had virtually no business," Randy recalled, "because at the time people thought it was crazy to be sending work to India. So we had a hundred people sitting in a room and we'd get one fax a day to type. When the fax came through, it was like a five-alarm fire—we'd all fall over each other trying to get it done, and we always, always fucked it up." But this slow start turned out to be profitable. During the mutual-reassurance sessions common to foundering enterprises, Joe and Randy got to know their employees better than they ordinarily might have. All were college educated. A third possessed postgraduate or doctoral degrees. Randy returned to New York to establish the American side of the business and, from a small office overlooking a Dunkin' Donuts, pressed his former Wall Street colleagues to give the Indian workers a trial run at higher-end labor.

Six years later, the Manhattan banks that Randy and Joe abandoned still have odes to "thrift" in their marble lobbies, but those banks also have rows of capacious, upholstered, untenanted cubicles. Almost twenty per cent of the jobs on Wall Street have disappeared in the last three years. Office Tiger recently doubled its staff, to sixteen hundred and fifty workers, and will nearly double in size again by year's end, on the strength of "judgment-dependent services": equity analysis, legal research, and accounting jobs that pay an annual salary of up to a hundred thousand dollars in the United States and between ten and twenty per cent of that in Chennai.

"Anything else?" Joe asked the subordinate who had informed him of investment bank No. 8. He ran his hand anxiously through his sandy hair—he had a reservation on the night's last flight. Well, actually, the colleague said, representatives of an investment bank in London wanted in. "They've just got to get the regulatory approvals, see how much of their work they can take offshore."

"All right, that's good. Is that it?"

Well, actually, the woman said, since he was travelling to the U.S. and London later this month, it might be nice if he stopped in to see some Office Tiger employees who were doing on-site analysis at another investment bank. Joe was momentarily nonplussed; he'd forgotten that his Tigers were in-house there.

"I mean, it's not essential," the subordinate said. "Only, if you had time it would be a nice show of support . . ."

"I get it, I'll do it—sweet idea. Anything else?"

Well, actually, there was another impending new contract. "It's been fast-tracked, they want to go live with a pilot."

Salomon Brothers in its heyday received five hundred job applications a month. Office Tiger sometimes receives fifteen hundred applicants a day, many of them accompanied by parents who pray as their sons and daughters take one test after another in the hope of earning an interview with the beautiful, ruthlessly efficient human-resources executive in black pajamas, who does her work in the reception area, behind a thin glass wall. As Joe returned one more phone call—a cautious executive from Germany, which is experiencing an outsourcing backlash, too—the narrow hallway outside the firm's door grew crowded with the survivors of that testing. They sat in plastic chairs, heads in hands, awaiting their face-to-face encounters.

"Mercy, how do you think you did on the proofreading test?" the human-resources goddess, whose name is Sudha, asked one such survivor, who was perched on the edge of her seat.

"I found it quite easy," responded Mercy, fatally. Her score was eighty-five. Joe and Randy seek workers like themselves—the type haunted fifteen years later by the single question botched on the college aptitude test, and game to perform even dull tasks with, to use the local term, "full sincerity." A minute later, another applicant was warming the chair.

"Hindu culture tends to be gentle, forgiving of shortcomings, which is not exactly the Wall Street ethos," Joe said. Though he trains his workers intensively, cultural miscommunications remain. Not long ago, Office Tiger accidentally hand-delivered to the American consul Joe's underwear, which had been sent to him by his mother. Soon after, during a fast-turnaround project, Joe offended his staff by waving rupee notes—incentive—in front of their noses. He has given up trying to reprogram the hotel coffee-shop pianist, who, having realized that Joe is perhaps the only Jew in Chennai, routinely serenades him with "Hava Nagila" when he sits down to lunch, even when his companion is a Kuwaiti investor. But after Joe and Randy hired a former Coast Guard petty officer named Lonnie Sapp—a veteran of semi-pro football, a graduate of Connecticut's Trinity College, and almost certainly Chennai's only six-foot-four-inch African-American—to manage the workforce a smoothness settled over the operation, even without the grease of government bribes. (The Princetonians say that they won't pay them.) Cost-saving improvements percolated up from the production level. Satisfied clients begat more clients. And, by the time Randy and Joe turned thirty and outsourcing had become a term of art, they were undermining many of the assumptions that Americans try to nurture while watching their nation's jobs go overseas.

One false assumption had been that only the manufacture of goods, not the provision of services, could be exported. Another, supported most recently by the U.S. Department of Labor, is that the number of American jobs lost to outsourcing is minuscule. But Labor statisticians rely on the corporations to link their domestic downsizing to work they now send abroad—a connection that some corporate leaders are loath to make. Other analyses suggest that the number of American jobs lost to this phenomenon will soon reach a million, as the Indian and Chinese back-office sectors expand by thirty per cent a year. Indian analysts foresee outsourcing in biotech research, pharmaceuticals, architecture, and the law. Although many economists believe that this global transition is mutually beneficial—that an economy is better off specializing in areas where it is relatively more productive and importing in areas where it is not—a study by the University of California at Berkeley identifies fourteen million American jobs at risk in the near term. The latest consolation is that, since many outsourced jobs are low-end and mechanistic, Americans are now being liberated to use their exceptional skills as innovators and entrepreneurs. Being tactful, the Tigers pretend to agree. What is the advantage of pointing out that the country of Salman Rushdie and Amartya Sen may not, in fact, be creatively impaired? The résumés and credit-repair leaflets spewing into the copy shop from Texas are less diplomatic. They intimate that some Americans have been "freed up" to do nothing productive whatsoever.

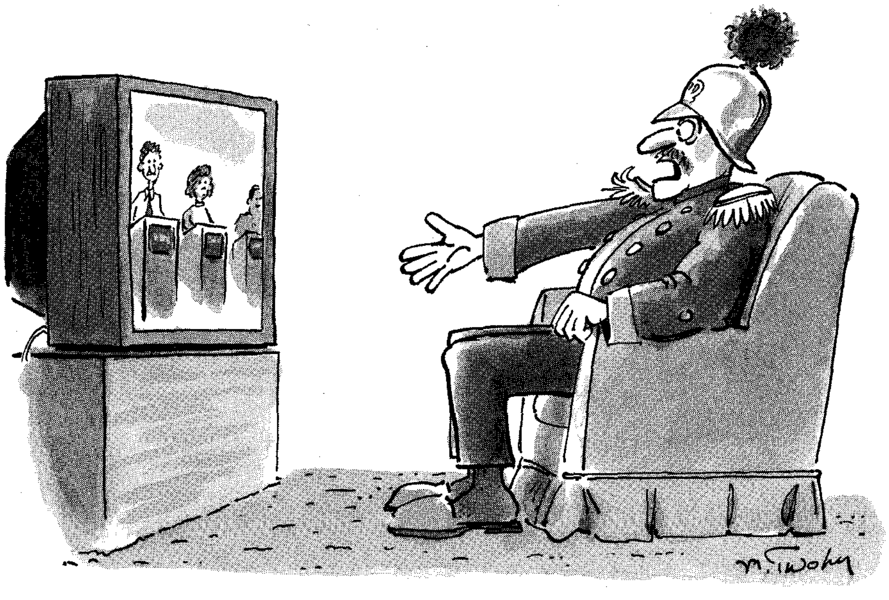
An Office Tiger manager concluded a phone call that required an American accent and began to help one of his document specialists decipher a five-page scrawled submission. "The supervisor called plaintiff gay, child molester, pedophile, and other malicious things": he slowly made out the words. " 'Pedophile' misspelled here," the typist noted quietly, in order not to disturb the concentration of her colleagues. "It's not 'p-h-e-d-o . . .' "

"And he obviously didn't mean to write 'viscous,' " the manager said. "It should be 'The vicious rumors that were spread . . .' "

"And in the next sentence that's 'hostile work environment.' "

"Hostile work environment" was not a concept that Joe and Randy had thought to introduce in cultural training, but the document specialists quickly learned it on the job. The phrase evoked very little recognition.

As Joe prepared to leave for the airport, a worker appeared at his office door—a slight twenty-six-year-old with a wispy mustache and a smile half the size of his face. In Indian-run workplaces, hierarchies are often too strict for



"Damn it! Ask something on the Franco-Prussian War!"

such unannounced visits. Here, employees drop by constantly; they are mesmerized by Joe. As Joe greeted him, his eyes settled on the younger man's collar. "Harish," he admonished. "That's why they put the buttons there—for you to use them." In his boss's wake, Harish stood buttoning and beaming, as if he'd been named employee of the year.

Seriously behind schedule now, Joe skipped to the front of the security gantlet at the entrance to the firm, where the pocketbooks and backpacks of departing workers were being searched to prevent the theft of Western corporate secrets. (The investigations that day turned up "Who Moved My Cheese?" and the Indian edition of *Cosmopolitan.*) "The outsourcing backlash?" Joe was saying. To him, it was political entertainment, music for Presidential campaigns. "In the real world, it's inexorable. This is radical global change, and it is going to happen more and more, not just because the labor in developing countries is cheaper but because the work is often done better. Businesses will have to outsource to stay competitive, and eventually the American public will get used to it. Look, that's what a free market is all about."

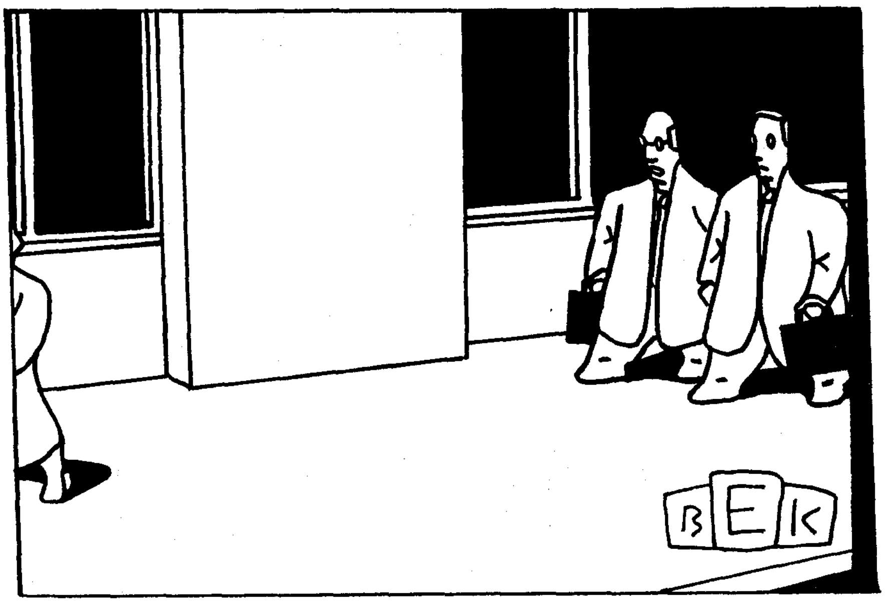
Joe passed the applicants awaiting interviews, lost time in a balky elevator, and recovered that time by racing through the twilight to the Taj Hotel, a few hundred yards from Office Tiger, where he has been living for the past five years. His route was through a back alley, where he dodged a succession of two-wheelers, three or four passengers astride. Some of the riders were his employees, hastening to work at the start of the American business day. "It kills me," he said, shaking his head. "Their brains are their careers, but I can't get any of them to wear a helmet." He stopped momentarily in his hotel room, where the liveried workers who deliver his meals often petition him, sometimes successfully, for jobs. At the airport, flight attendants were waiting to hand him his ticket and escort him onto the plane. Despite a philosophical commitment to what he calls "lavatory class" travel, Joe is regularly bumped to first class. The flight attendants, it recently dawned on him, might want to be Tigers, too.

His collar properly buttoned now, the cheerful worker named Harish Kumar, who not long ago took pleasure in sewing his own clothes, stood in the front of a white-walled classroom. The room's chief decoration was a flyer stating the criminal consequences of insider trading. Ten middle-aged students wearing electronic-security cards around their necks held their fingers over computer keyboards; they did not want to miss a word. The students were known as Office Tiger "candidates"—the two per cent of applicants who had been, provisionally, hired. The job of Harish (known as Harry to American clients and Employee No. 489 to electronic security) was to teach them the Western business tools and mores they would need to survive a six-month probation period and become full-fledged Tigers. Much of the previous week had been devoted to the consequences of revealing proprietary information and engaging in securities fraud—subjects that Joe and Randy had instructors teach until they saw fear in candidates' eyes. Now, following a vigorous discussion of spreadsheets, Harish turned to a practical problem. "Let us ready ourselves," he told his students, "to make an organizational chart using PowerPoint."

Leaning his gaunt frame over the keyboard, Harish tapped until a giant green box was projected onto a white wall. He tapped the keyboard again: two smaller boxes materialized beneath the large one, and then four more boxes, smaller still. Then he laid out the problem to be solved. In most organizations there is one "boss box" and many subordinate ones. "Now, can you make all of them perfectly align?"

When New Yorkers like Joe apologize for speaking quickly, Indians smile. They speak faster—especially when working for companies like Office Tiger, where a third of all work assignments must be sent back to the United States within an hour. Harish's speech is truly rapid, because before his candidates graduate to permanent status they're expected to master two dozen subjects—among them securities regulations, Western manners, and Manhattan investment-banking slang. "Verygood, verynice," Harish now complimented one of the classroom's better box-aligners, allowing his "r"s to roll in his enthusiasm, though it violated the conventions of American pronunciation. "And, of course, you can draw the connectors this way, drag-and-drop," he said, demonstrating. "But is it the most efficient way? No. It is too slow. Remember, very often the banker is going to make all sorts of changes. You will want to accommodate him, and quickly."

In his curriculum, Harish wastes no time discussing wage differentials or the asymmetry of the power relationship. Among his students, the colonial resonances are not ignored; they're understood. Upon consideration, the students will argue that, since America is globalization's great hegemon, it's an advantage to work for Americans directly, instead of for Indian-owned companies like Infosys or Wipro, where U.S. work is also done. Tigers can learn from Joe's perfection-



"Weekends I like to be able to panic without having all the distractions."

TO THE MOSS

How you came to know all that you are sure of
how you discovered the darkness of green
uncurling into the daylight out of
its origins unsounded as your own
how you learned to fashion shapes of water
into softness itself that stayed in place
and kept some secret of caves wherever
you were but with such welcome seemed to rise
that in time you became as some believe
a model for the cheek and then the breast
the wren felt she knew most of that before
there were breasts or cheeks and she made out of
living bits of you the globe of her nest
as though that was what you had grown there for

—*W. S. Merwin*

ism, from his preference for J. C. Penney ties, from his imperviousness to fatigue, and from his wry self-deprecation—useful, they note, in softening the effect of a command. On the rare occasion that Joe gets angry, his workers sometimes forget to register the cause, engaged as they are in studying the technique. "Joe is our Harvard Business School," Harish says. "We watch his energy and aggression and try to learn."

To explain the yearning that brought them to Office Tiger, Harish and his students invariably use the same word: "exposure." In its Indian sense, "exposure" means not publicity or vulnerability but contact with the world beyond Chennai. After three years at Office Tiger, Harish is still occasionally jarred by dislocation. When Wall Streeters call and say, "Hey, Harry, what's up?"—as they do, often—the wrong picture always pops into his mind. What's up is a rotating metal fan on the low Styrofoam ceiling of the room where he sleeps, on the floor, beside his father, mother, brother, and grandmother. The ceiling fan's hum is a baseline to Harish's late-night puzzling about the virtual world he now inhabits.

"I am afraid I was born a quirky and curious boy," Harish says. "Like Harry Potter, you could say, without glasses." Globalization has given him a work life rich in riddles. Why do Americans speak of the "end" of a show called "Friends," when in India it runs in perpetuity, serving as a more effective instructor than anyone at Office Tiger on the subject of the American vernacular? Is it really a compliment to say of someone, "She is dynamite"? The words themselves make Harish shudder. "We'll have to pay through the nose" and "He jumped down my throat" make him wince. More pleasant in its mysteriousness is "couch potato." There was, when he first came to Office Tiger, the expression "just hang loose until tomorrow," but he hasn't heard that one in a while. In the outsourcing business, a sudden surge in clients is called an "escalation"—a word that warns of seven-day workweeks. Office Tiger has been escalating for nearly two years now, the growth of its Wall Street research operations fuelled by regulatory reforms that came (along with criminal actions and billion-dollar legal settlements) when United States banks were caught manipulating their research in order to boost the profits of favored clients. Companies now send junior-analyst and research jobs to Office Tiger not just because it is cheaper but also because it is nine thousand miles from Wall Street temptations. Harish has been granted full exposure. Now it's home with which he struggles to make contact.

The neighborhood where Harish has lived all his life is named Triplicane, and was once an ancient fishermen's village. It is today so densely populated that some travel guides mistake it for a slum. Harish's house is off the main road, in an alley of jasmine peddlers, Muslim shop workers, and Hindu priests. He rises around 5:30 A.M., mounts his rusted bike, and rides to work, startling the neighborhood parrots and the buffalo that lug the milkmen's wares. His passage doesn't rouse the beggar children, who have learned his recently acquired belief that direct handouts to the poor encourage sloth. At work, he trains his candidates, takes ten minutes or so for lunch in the office pantry, and trains some more. At seven-thirty in the evening, when it's 9 A.M. in New York, he confers with the American banking clients for whom he tailors his training, to insure that he is emphasizing the right skills. And then he turns to a slew of computer-programming challenges that may show management his greater gifts. He often goes home after midnight.

On his concrete threshold in Triplicane, as on others in the neighborhood, is an intricate chalk design known as a *kolam*. His grandmother, who is seventy-nine, draws it there each morning, in the Hindu hope of keeping catastrophe safely out in the streets. At night, from her mat, she listens for her grandson, sometimes cupping a hand around an elaborately bejewelled ear. The ear adornment was the custom in the village where she was born, a place where the tigers were real and said to devour boys in one go, not bit by bit each workday. She is the first at the door when her grandson rings the bell. He leaves his new square-toed lace-ups at the threshold, swallows a few spoonfuls of rice to silence protests about his declining weight, and joins his extended family on the floor. It is then that his grandmother, if not Harish, can sleep.

"Harish? There are a hundred here like him," the human-resources goddess once observed in passing. To Harish, that's no slight, it's heaven. The office is crammed with smart young people who speak freely and are as open to ideas as he is. It is what he imagines an American college dorm might be like, and in it he has shed the shyness of childhood. Though the money he earns is welcome, he is sometimes at a loss as to how to spend it. "For instance, when I wanted a computer for my parents' home it was simpler to gather discarded parts and make it myself," he said. Since becoming a Tiger, he has made a single significant outlay: to help his parents retire. Every month now, he hands them his paycheck, and when he needs another button-down shirt he has to ask them. Usually, they say yes.

In Hindu families, to acknowledge the gifts of a child too early is to put him at risk—to provoke the evil eye. So Harish's father put away an accidental tape recording he had made of his first-born and did not listen to it for years. Harish's parents had been trying to record Hindu devotional songs from the All India Radio station when their son, eleven months old, grew incensed at their inattention. He began to shriek, and in their exasperation at the now-botched recording the parents didn't immediately recognize the content of the baby's cries. In Tamil, he was saying, "I want my ABCs."

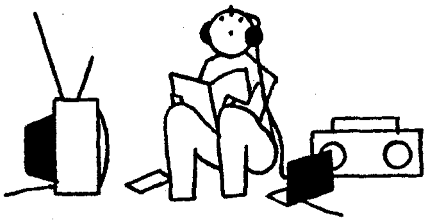
As smart as the child might have been, they worried how he would intersect with the world. The family was of the education-revering Brahmin caste, but the parents were too poor for the mother to fulfill her expected role of staying home and tutoring Harish and his younger brother and sister. She worked instead as a clerk in a government office, her intelligence never rewarded. Her husband worked across town, in another government office, and Harish grew up in his own imagination—a world of Isaac Asimov and astronauts and the ships that he could see dropping anchor in the Bay of Bengal, if he chose a certain seat by a certain window in his schoolroom and trained his peripheral vision just so.

In that schoolroom, he was a failure, flunking math, science, and geography year after year. In sports, he was fast but too small. His solace was "The Harish Book of Records and News": a brown-paper chapbook in which he drew intricate sketches of Gandhi and pasted newspaper clippings. Like other boys, he was drawn to cricket stars and advertisements for films like "Godzilla Fights King Monster." He also collected reports of improbable talent. There was the Delhi boy who set a record by belching ninety-one times in a single minute, and a legless man who swam from Italy to Sicily, and a Chinese dentist who popped his patients' teeth out by pressing his fingers on their necks. Harish longed to find his own unconventional ability, because by the time he reached the age of twelve his teachers had concluded that higher education was not in his future.

His parents, anguished at their own child-rearing deficiencies, couldn't summon the anger to beat him for his academic failure. So he exacted his own punishment. He ran to the Bay of Bengal marina, where he regularly played cricket with the boys he called his "batch." Sitting apart on the sand, he made a stark accounting. Having squandered advantages that his parents had sacrificed to give him, he would try to accept his mediocrity with grace. At sixteen, he left school. After a stint as a magician for children's parties—"Of course, there was no magic to my mind reading," he said, "just the tricks of psychology and logic"—he enrolled in a computer-training course.

A society with far more bright aspirants than promising jobs inevitably becomes an over-credentialled one. The institutions from which the young amass certificates and ribbons are sometimes rigorous, sometimes fraudulent, but all have rousing names. Harish's school was called, simply, Brilliant. There were programming languages to learn and independent explorations to launch, and, when his curiosities took him beyond the lesson plan, his new teachers did not object. Some days, there were no teachers at all. On one such morning, Harish rose to help his classmates get through an exercise in accounting. An administrator happened by, registered a smart, coherent presence at the head of the classroom, and hired the boy, age seventeen, as faculty.

"My colleagues were much older and more learned than I, but it was such a rich time, sitting there like a pet, being fed what they knew," Harish said. In turn, he enriched seven years' worth of subsequent Brilliant scholars. Now, after insuring that no other Tiger will see him being "over-prideful," he will tap for a second on his keyboard and bring up an American Web site that lists the holders of Microsoft Office Master Instructor certification. The site reports that the United States has seven hundred master instructors, Yugoslavia has five, and Oman and Botswana three each. India has just one: Harish.



In the classrooms of his childhood, he had tried to imagine what it would feel like to be on one of the ships moving out of the bay. When a colleague at Brilliant made the leap to Office Tiger and encouraged Harish to come, too, he saw himself as finally aboard. For other Tigers, there were other metaphors, but the sense of movement after decades of socioeconomic stasis was the same. Harish's friend Vidhya, who is twenty-five, heady with her rise from reception to well-salaried senior management, bought her parents not just freedom from their jobs but a house—a gesture so expansive that her parents chose to overlook her new stilettos. Other parents cringed to hear the children they had raised on Gandhian notions of national self-sufficiency faking American accents into their cell phones. But most accepted the air-conditioning units nonetheless, and few could help feeling pleasure. Those parents had had dreams of ships themselves.

Harish, usually lighthearted, was sobered by the fact that the hopes of some trainees would be thwarted in his classroom. The ultimate goal of his teaching was something that Joe and Randy called "foolproofing." In a company that offered judgment-dependent services, clients needed to believe that those judgments were routine, culturally uninflected, idiosyncrasy-free—that ten people confronted with the same data set would rank ten different utility companies the same way. As adroit as Harish was at the front of the classroom, it was after class that he excelled. That's when he studied data from intricate programs he'd invented that analyzed keyboard strokes in training and alerted him to students falling behind. These tools were an extension of his peripheral vision—a means of discerning the person sitting in the corner, miserably lost. Alone with his data, he was excited to find consistent error: those who made the same category of mistake repeatedly were the ones he knew how to help. But wild variations in performance depressed him. "The data analysis is convincing on this point," he said. Erratic, unfocussed students, the ones like him in his pre-computing days, were those who would not make the cut.

When Harish tried to explain his inventions, he made them sound modest, self-therapeutic—fiddlings of a restless wit. There was something else at work too, something that resisted both old-fashioned Hindu acceptance and his new peers' enthusiasm for meritocracy, with its bright distinctions between those who are capable and those who are not. Improbability was, after all, his stock in trade. If he wrote the right programs, taught his classes in the clearest and most effective way, he wondered, why shouldn't all his batch win?

On a sweltering March evening, the glass doors of the inaptly named Breeze Hotel grew opaque with the smudge-prints of noses. One by one, impoverished locals were risking the hard swats of doormen to catch a few seconds of the final game of a historic India-Pakistan cricket match, which was being broadcast onto a vast fabric screen in the lobby. Not long before, at the Indian government's behest, tailors had stitched together four hundred square metres of green-and-black cloth, in order to cloak the Taj Mahal, up north, in case of bombing raids. Now a public fatigued by perpetual nuclear threat was investing in the promise of sports. The real unifying mechanism, however, appeared to be the logos of Pepsi and Samsung, plastered on every available swag, signpost, and cap. On the pumped chest of Indian and Pakistani batsman, country identification came second to corporate branding.

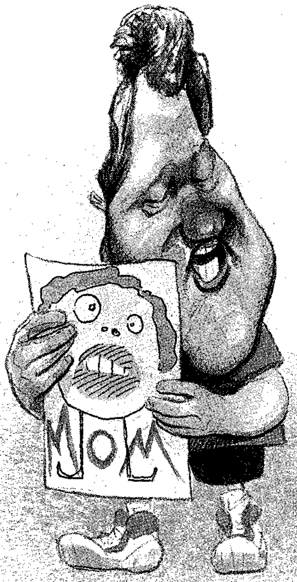
This ranking of company over country suited many of the Chennai élite who had assembled that night in the Breeze Hotel's upstairs banquet room. The city's Rotary Club was honoring an entrepreneur named Ranjini Manian, whose firm, Global Adjustments, had settled the families of thousands of multinational executives into the city. Just as Nostradamus had predicted the toppling of the World Trade Center, the Rotary governor said, he had prophesied that India would be a superpower. He gleefully reeled off the names of Global Adjustment's prominent clients, but then his

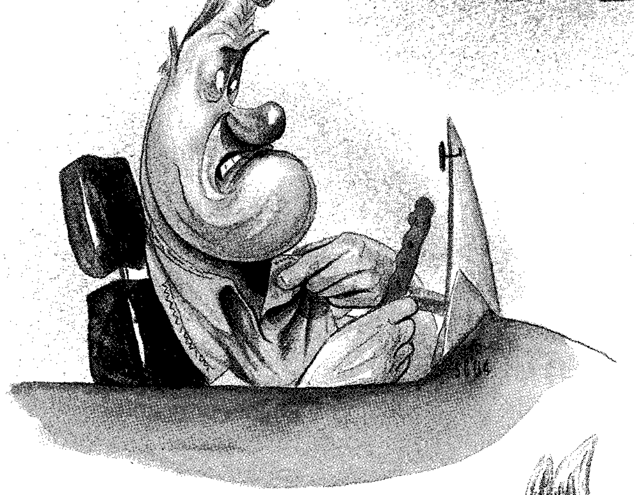
STEVE BRODNER; JEN GREENMAN

(The Rest of) My Life

Bill Clinton's nine-hundred-and-fifty-seven-page memoir is by no means exhaustive. Space constraints resulted in the omission of a number of incidents from his life.

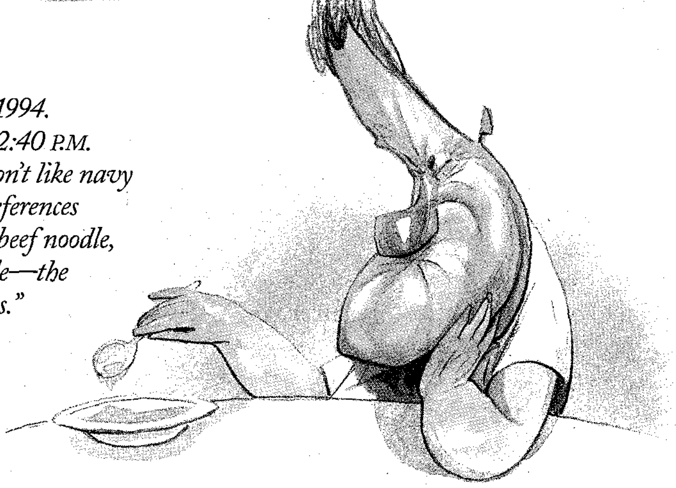
September 25, 1951.
2 P.M.-3 P.M. "And then, in the typical way that kids make drawings, I made one large circle for the head and two vertical lines for the legs."

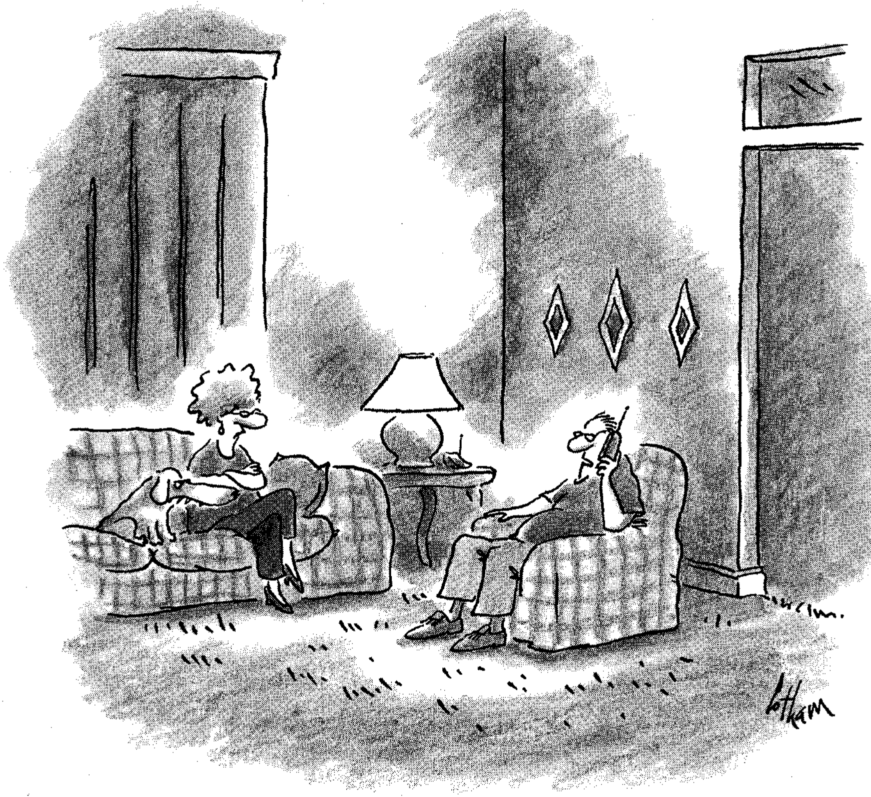




March 31, 1979.
8:18 A.M.-8:20 A.M. "At the stoplight, I glimpsed myself in the rearview mirror and saw that my shirt was inside-out. It was a polo-style shirt, with an insignia that was neither horse nor alligator."

January 18, 1994.
12:15 P.M.-12:40 P.M. "Usually, I don't like navy bean. My preferences tend toward beef noodle, chicken noodle—the noodlier soups."





"I can't go, guys, because my wife hates freedom."

mood darkened slightly. Hollywood—"a multibillion-dollar industry, you know"—was not on the list. Reach out to American film moguls, he urged Ranjini and the other attendees. "Tell them that they can film in India for ten per cent of what they're currently spending."

The Rotary governor's interest was not wholly public-minded. His day job was in the film industry. For decades, many of Tamil Nadu's leading citizens have been movie stars. The state's highest office, chief minister, has been held in turn by an action hero, the action hero's widow, and now his mistress, individuals with that electoral essential—name recognition. The mistress, a clever, voluptuous ingénue named Jayalalithaa, turned to politics two decades ago, when her measurements began to exceed the requirements of feature films. As Chief Minister, she had backed new businesses like Office Tiger, and had become the subject of corruption investigations so bitter and complex that few citizens retained the stamina to follow them.

Easier to absorb were the vivid, twice-life-size paintings of her agreeable face which virtually coated the city. The fact that most were thickly streaked with the residue of urine streams was not a political expression but, rather, a reflection of the fact that, multinationals or no, forty per cent of Chennaians live in slum dwellings, where latrines are few. In Chennai, such deprivations provoked only intermittent political concern. Although national and regional elections were just two months away, the biggest Jayalalithaa sign—a monumental billboard looking down from the highway—promoted not jobs or political programs but "Jaya TV": a twenty-four-hour channel that plays, among other entertainments, the romantic-comedy hits of the Chief Minister's svelter days. Jaya TV does not cover such irony-rich events as the one last fall when she called for the arrest of five journalists from one of the country's most respected newspapers, after they editorialized about her capricious use of power.

It is a civic mystery—albeit one that few people are laboring to solve—why the swelling number of businesses has failed to correspondingly improve Chennai's municipal finances and access to health care and education. The same was true of Bangalore until a few years ago, when Ramesh Ramanathan, one of Citibank North America's most successful derivatives traders, quit, went home to India, and dedicated himself to empowering Bangalore slum dwellers. He promptly discovered that city bureaucrats had no accounting system in place, and that tax money was disappearing; he set to educating the government himself. But Chennai had yet to produce a civic saint. It baffled Tigers to learn that Joe and Randy hoped eventually to enter Republican politics, as Michael Bloomberg had done—after making so much money that he was, theoretically, beholden to no one. The meritocrats, who believed that their own hard work was extricating India from a Third World past, were glad to leave public policy to erstwhile movie stars—a detachment that in turn increased political inefficiency and histrionics. Government would do best, Tigers liked to say, by getting out of the way. At times, this seemed already the case. Though Tamil Nadu had a devastating HIV-infection caseload and nearly a hundred thousand children died annually of preventable diseases, the health-care topic of greater local interest was the progress of a Chennai-based hospital chain named Apollo. Apollo was aggressively recruiting ailing Westerners who were willing to outsource their hip replacements or chemotherapy. Thanks in part to reasonably priced postsurgical sightseeing tours, the chain's hospitals were now treating twenty thousand foreign patients a year. Meanwhile, as Chennai's population surged on the prospect of good new jobs, rents in Triplicane and other middle-class neighborhoods doubled. Electricity prices jumped, too. But by far the greatest problem was the fact that although residents now had Cosmopolitans and Red Bull, they had no water.

In front of the main local reservoir, there is a sign in Tamil that reads "No bathers and washers," and this spring there were none. Instead, there were men, women, dogs, and Brahma cows walking across the reservoir's bed, which had become an inter-village shortcut, and upon which wildflowers bloomed. Before Chennai's hot season had even begun, water reserves were lower than they'd been in fifty years. Harish's home, like most others, had little or no running water. Inoperative water pumps outside houses and apartments were covered with dust, and were attended by dry troughs for rainwater harvesting—a conservation technique mandated by the government three years ago, just as the drought began. Residents spent hours queuing for emergency water rations that tankers brought in from the hinterlands. In Triplicane pawnshops, fathers sold pieces of their daughters' dowries to buy bottled water to give those daughters a drink and a wash. In nearby Poonamallee, where a century-old pond evaporated, hundreds of homeless turtles wandered onto a thoroughfare, where their search for an alternative water source ended badly.

The gods' will, residents said of the drought. But to follow the water tankers out of the city in their search for a place to refill was to glimpse a human factor, too. In Chennai, as in most of India, groundwater is not a public good; it's a private, barely regulated commodity. Thus, for decades, corporations and individuals have bored deep into fossil water, which is not replenishable—a pell-mell water mining that has left what remains as brackish as the sea. Some could afford to drill deeper than others. Just past a village where the price of watermelon had tripled and sheep had died of dehydration, there emerged the shining signage of two soft-drink bottling plants—Pepsi, first, then the bigger, glossier Coca-Cola, which sits on the greenest plot for miles around.

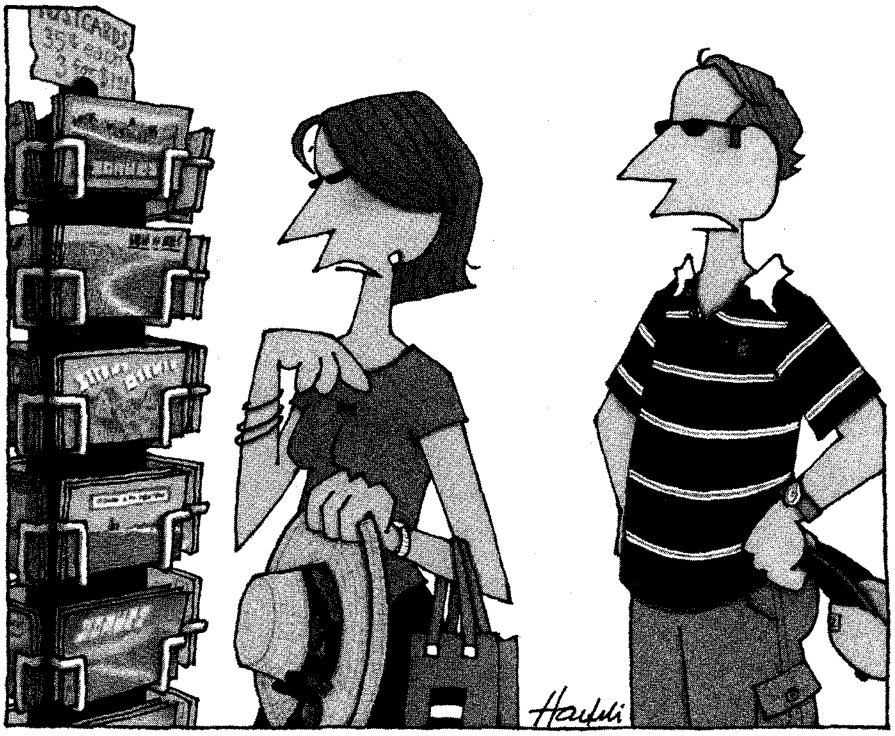
There is a Tamil proverb, "When someone suffers, offer water first." Villagers say it with irony now. As the water tankers rattled farther and farther into the hills in search of unspoiled lakes, other trucks were rumbling back toward parched Chennai. Their flatbeds were stacked high with yellow-green bottles of Sprite, shimmering in the midday sun.

The beach where Harish wandered one Saturday night contained roughly the same number of kite sellers and beggar children as it had when he was a twelve-year-old failure, but neon signs promoting bank loans and washing machines had altered the quality of the light. The quality of the air, too, was appreciably different, owing to a traffic jam fifty yards away. Harish would have mourned this transformation more if he hadn't been rethinking the concept of place. Lately, he considered community less a function of roads and roofs and tea shops than of imagination. Even the solid presence of his grandmother could dematerialize at the late-night ring of his cell phone, the urgent summons of American clients. And while his parents rolled their eyes at the constant needs of the world beyond Chennai, Harish saw the calls as tidings of cultural integration, more niches for curious boys.

He had just seen the film "The Lord of the Rings," which had prompted him to reflect on Asimov and the rest of his science-fiction and fantasy canon. "Now I can hardly think of those books as fiction anymore," he said. "So many new things have been happening, and what just last year seemed impossible is now not. What I think instead is how lucky I am to have been born into this strange, right time. In these last years, we've found that New York and Chennai can do the same things—that we almost are the same thing. Already, we are half of the time in New York, just our bodies are left behind." In such hybrid lives, he knew, some parts of one's culture disappear. But among the vanished elements might be caste discrimination and religious bigotry—things Harish longed to see go. "So much of globalization is, I think, mischaracterized and misunderstood. It is because of this trend that there will come a day when there are no boundaries, no castes or divides between Muslims and Hindus or Christians—a day when, indeed, there will be no nations at all! Indian time? New York time? They are passing phenomena, in my opinion. Soon we will all share one time zone—or, really, there will be no time at all."

There was already, in his life, no time. He had been working like mad for his American clients. There was a programming job that outside contractors had said they'd need three months to complete. Harish did it on his own in sixty hours. "It was just intuitive, a three-day stunt," he said, modestly. "I have no big theories, but some problems I can solve from the bottom up." Such efficiency-minded innovation was a Tiger trademark, and helped explain why, over five years, only a single American company had, after a trial run at Office Tiger, opted out. (The exception was a New York firm that, battered by the events of September 11th, decided not to traumatize workers further by sending their jobs offshore.)

The constant expansion required new macros, databases, quality-control systems, and information systems—so many inventions, so urgently needed, that Ha-



"Just pick some. No one expects a postcard to reflect your personal aesthetic."

rish didn't always consider their implications. For instance, the system he'd created to help candidates see and correct their data-entry errors had now mutated into a tool that helped executives identify and remove imperfect "permanent" workers. But, at the end of long days of inventing and foolproofing and universalizing the judgments of others, Harish preferred to dwell on his own recent performance evaluation, which described his contribution as "phenomenal."

"Whatever I accomplish, I forget, because I am thinking about the next thing," Harish said. So he focussed not on his employers' praise—"a source of inspiration," "role model," "strong intellectual curiosity," "loyal to O.T."—but on future possibilities. If he worked to improve his communication skills and written English, he would be "groomed to handle supervisory activities." This faith in his future as an employee was particularly welcome, as he was feeling a bit inadequate at home.

Southern India is a place of euphemism, and so the contagious cultural disease infecting firms that do American business is known simply as "susceptibility." Susceptibility explained why Harish's colleague Mike wouldn't even turn around now if you called him Mohan, the name his parents gave him. It explained why the foreheads on which women wore caste markers of sandalwood paste were now being inoculated against worry lines by Botox. Harish had stood out, among his colleagues, for his genial resistance to some of the American values that were pouring into ears and e-mail in-boxes. Though he celebrated the notion of a boundaryless world, he noticed the inflationary prices in the Triplicane bazaars and the loss of protections for clerical workers, like his mother. He rejected the late-model cell phones his colleagues coveted, and, on the Office Tiger intranet, he began to intersperse the mix of Wall Street news bulletins with the verses of an ancient Tamil poet, Tiruvalluvar. He wanted to remind his Britney-emulating, whiskey-drinking colleagues of their native culture of civility and humility.

"I worry that nowadays anything near us seems unimportant, while anything we can't see becomes larger than life," he said. "We don't see relevance in our great poet, our mother tongue. It is not the tongue of work and money. But hidden inside these simple verses are great meaning and complication—concentrated understanding of how to live."

There was, however, one verse of the Tamil poet he now skimmed through quickly. To read it would be to hear not his own voice but his mother's:

> With a good wife, what is lacking?
> Lacking that wife, what is good?

Most of Chennai's young professionals, modern as they are becoming in myriad material ways, still honor a great cultural expectation: to marry by arrangement of their parents. Those parents' methods of identifying future partners have, inevitably, evolved: now many use the Web site tamilmatrimony.com to seek brides and grooms on their children's behalf. Prospective mates are often expected to have compatible castes and horoscopes, "guileless, clean habits," and "glasses—if at all—with negligible refractive errors." But, increasingly, parents ask as well for "career-oriented, internationally minded M.B.A.s." Harish was, from guilelessness to business prospects to good eyesight, a more brilliant catch than his parents had once anticipated. They were eager to marry him, and he had wanted to be married—until the moment was upon him, and he balked.

His grandmother sought solace at the temple, next door; his mother and father were more hurt than they wanted to show. "It was just our wish and will," his mother said, and left it there. She and her husband were still in love, thirty-two years after the match their parents had made. Did Harish doubt their ability to choose well? He seemed to cherish his family, but he had not seen his younger,

NOBODY COMES BETWEEN NANCY & HER MONDRIAN married sister in more than a year, and she lived right in Chennai. Perhaps his heart had been freelancing? Harish almost wished that were the case. The truth was, he wanted to be left alone to work.

He had somehow thought that holding the line against Americanization would make it simpler to submit to his Indian duty. But, whether or not he bought the Dockers or the Florsheims sold in the shopping mall next to the office, it seemed that his work was changing him more than he had realized. "It's a cat's cradle," he said unhappily. "I don't want to force myself into differing from my parents. I have told them I do not need a love marriage, but I'm not ready. There are so many expectations—for the marriage, first, and then, a year later, for the child—and my goals for now are different. . . ." He trailed off. "What to do? So much of one's life is an accident."

Harish might have taken comfort from knowing that his venerated boss felt similar pressure. Back in Staten Island, Joe's mother lamented the unmarried state of her handsome, funny, successful son—thirty-three already and decamped in a hotel in a far-flung city that likely contained not one unmarried Jewish woman. If he lived in New York, Joe's mother suggested, Emma Bloomberg, the Mayor's daughter, would be an agreeable choice.

Great, sure, Joe said—just not yet. He envied Randy his wife, a ballet dancer who recently finished Cornell medical school with honors. Randy, who is tall and brooding, sensibly fell in love with her at Princeton, before the company had become a preoccupation. They had been married for six years, and she was by now accustomed to his asceticism; their apartment in Jersey City suited her fine, and her schedule was as brutal as his.

Joe couldn't say with certainty the last time he'd been on a date, but it didn't trouble him as much as his mother wished it would. He found more than compensatory pleasure in building the business. After five years of intellectual challenge and cultural escapade, Randy and Joe's company had become first respectable, then profitable; someday soon it might make them quite rich.

Joe took pride in how few employees left the company even when presented with more lucrative offers. A whiteboard in the office listed points for Tiger executives to emphasize when recruiting: "Hi-end / Hi-tech—Office FAMILY." Workers like Harish keenly believed in the latter. It distressed them to imagine professional lives in which they weren't Tigers. Joe and Randy, though, saw Office Tiger, Chennai, as a particularly meaningful episode of their ever-evolving lives. They were contemplating acquisitions now, maybe a merger later, and then wealthy-enough-not-to-be-beholden political careers.

Ambitious plans, Joe knew, "and I worry that talking about them makes me sound like a jerk. But Randy and I were raised on the premise that, if you work hard for something, most of the time you will get it. You know, that's the single greatest thing about America, and, if that's what Americanization of the world means, I'm all for it. Neither Randy nor I was born rich; Randy's mother raised him by herself. But when we decided we wanted to build something close to a perfect meritocracy, where workers got recognized for what they did, not for whom they knew or how much money they were born with, we committed ourselves totally, and it happened—it's not perfect, but it's real, and our workers' lives have been changed for the better."

One Saturday night, after ten, he ran from a working dinner to Chennai's Sheraton hotel to say goodbye to visitors from an American publishing firm that had increased its Office Tiger contract more than tenfold over a three-year period. As a matter of frugality, Joe does not own a car, relying instead on the shabby auto-rickshaws that line the streets. "How much to the Sheraton?" he called to one of the waiting drivers. Twenty rupees, the driver responded—forty-three American cents.

Too much, Joe said, moving on.

"But you can afford it, boss," the driver protested bitterly to Joe's receding back. Such comments gave Joe no pause. Equating what a person can afford to what he is willing to pay—a classic starter capitalist's mistake.

As the heat rose and astrological predictions of late-March rain turned out to be wrong, the southern outskirts of the city began to look like the inside of a snow globe. Under clouds of white dust, outcaste laborers were hectically crushing stone to supply the foundations of the new Chennai. Infosys, having overgrown its current campus, was expanding it to a hundred and twenty-nine acres; a Teaneck, New Jersey, firm was erecting its second "techno-complex." To support these and other corporate enclaves, a public-works effort was widening roads and building new ones—meticulously landscaped, the government promised on one of its corporation-luring Web sites, "and cattle-free."

The road improvements had begun a strange gavotte. Poor families were setting up households in sections of drainage pipe that were about to be laid beneath the road. City authorities, conscious of the vistas presented to business travellers, regularly expelled them, after which the pipe dwellers returned, only to be dispatched another day. The stone crushers, inside their white-dust world, were too busy to discern, day to day, who in this dance was actually leading. On hundred-and-ten-degree days, in more than forty makeshift camps, they used pickaxes to break up huge rocks that had been delivered from nearby quarries. They wore no masks, just rags on top of their heads to soften the freight of the stone chunks they ferried to pulverizing machines. When they had crushed their daily quota, they headed home, to dust-coated thatched barracks a few steps from the machinery.

The silica by-product of the stone crushers' livelihood had long ago eradicated most plant life in the vicinity, and made it hard to see, on some days, more than a few yards in front of one's face. Occasionally, though, clouds of siliciferous dust resolved themselves into barefoot children, laboring alongside their parents. At least five people, a five-year-old boy among them, had recently been killed in accidents at the stone-crushing camps. Officially, the stone crushers' children are in school. "No labor for them," one resident explained, "at least until they are seven."

Tamil Nadu was among the first of India's states to attempt to close its opportunity gap by setting aside government jobs for lower castes. After this opportunity was bestowed upon the poor, however, the élites began to realize that government work wasn't the work they really wanted. Today, at private corporations like Office Tiger, the official stance on caste is "Don't ask, don't tell." This scruple excuses executives from acknowledging what impolite inquiry makes clear: Brahmin and other upper castes dominate the supervisory class, while untouchables still clean toilets. They're lucky to have jobs at all.

More than 5.6 million people in Harish's generation alone are unemployed in Tamil Nadu, a depressing answer to the question that Randy and Joe are occasionally asked by New York executives. After so much outsourcing, are there still Indians to be hired? Given the pervasiveness of need, the state literacy rate of seventy-four per cent is impressive, and indicative of the breadth of faith in education. For the poor, however, such faith is unlikely to be rewarded in the new meritocracy.

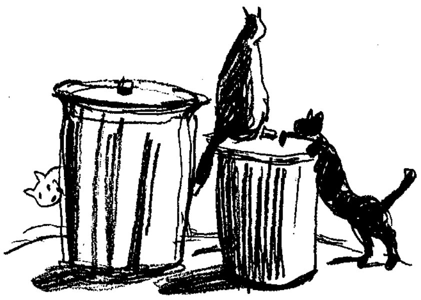
In one stone-crusher camp, silica settled into the tea and home-brewed liquor that laborers sipped one day after work. They coughed up what they could while contemplating the news that played on a black-and-white television inside one of the huts. The volume knob had been turned high, because the stone-crushing trade is, literally, deafening. The workers learned that Infosys was about to have its first billion-dollar year. They wanted their children to get into the "software trades," too. But English is now, as in colonial times, the sine qua non of Indian opportunity, and neither the stone crushers nor their children can speak it. The government-run schools that serve the camps still emphasize Tamil and require the purchase of shoes, textbooks, and supplies that few can afford. Meanwhile, tuition at private schools that stress English has spiralled, in response to parental demand. And so the stone-crusher children work, while there is work to be had.

Academics who study the future of world labor see, in the middle distance, a divide so stark that the term "division of labor" will no longer apply. Poorer societies will work, they say, while the richer ones will invest and consume. But the stone crushers can sense a third category fast emerging. At a camp a few yards from this one, there has recently appeared a highly automated stone-crushing apparatus. Even illiterate laborers can grasp the economic function: more capital for technology means, at least in the short run, less capital of the human kind. One benefit of the dust was that, except on the stillest days, they did not have to look upon the engine of their obsolescence.

In April came the Hindu New Year and the final campaigns before the national and local elections, which pro-business candidates were expected to dominate on the strength of an 8.1-per-cent increase in G.D.P. In Harish's neighborhood, Triplicane, a crucial issue was joblessness—a matter that gained urgency when Chief Minister Jayalalithaa fired a hundred and seventy thousand government workers who had gone on strike. In the villages and the countryside, people organized behind the candidates whom they felt best understood the ruinous economic and human implications of the drought. In downtown office buildings, though, the preoccupation remained American work. Joe had just leased a large building, whose sleek reception area would be redone in Princeton colors—a fitting complement to Office Tiger's new Manhattan office, which had green glass, Italian lighting, and a view of the New York Public Library's marble lions.

Joe was travelling now—meetings in London, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco that would soon bring more work to Chennai. In his absence, Sudha, in human resources, felt freer to fret. Though Joe seemed only sharper after weeks of missed dinners and nights with three hours of sleep, some of his subordinates weren't. But the outdoor cafés and game rooms that other companies offered didn't comport with what Joe called his "keep your head down and keep working" style.

"Maybe we can talk him into yoga classes during the lunch break," Sudha said one Friday evening, at the end of an eighty-hour week. A colleague mentioned Ayurvedic neck massage. If masseuses came around to workers' cubicles, the two concurred, productivity would be only briefly impeded.



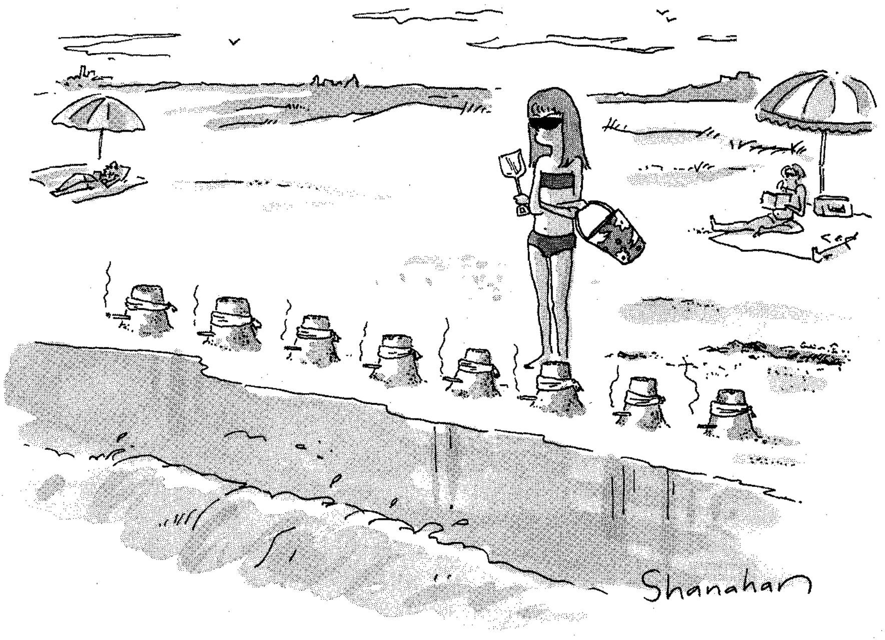
A little later, in the dark bar of the nearby Taj Hotel, Tigers finishing their own workweek evaluated the efficacy of other treatments. Some had been experimenting with Prozac—not for depression but because it seemed to help them concentrate despite sleep deprivation. Red Bull was agreed to be another reliable, short-term fix, while opinions differed on whether cigarettes packed a stimulative wallop. "But even if they do give you a little rush," one worker cautioned, "Joe's going to smell them on you, and then you're in for the lecture of your life." This discussion ceased when two Filipina singers in shiny plastic boots, fringed halters, and spandex miniskirts climbed onto the stage to suggest another alertness enhancer now available in Chennai.

"When your day is done and you wanna run—co-caine." The singers' voices were high, employing differing and indefinable keys, but they were nothing that whiskey couldn't mellow. Soon the Tigers were joined in the bar by jet-lagged Western and South African businessmen, sent by their companies to investigate the Indian outsourcing landscape. On a sofa lay an abandoned newsweekly whose cover story described the lack of youth interest in the elections, which were now only a month away. "It is ALARMING that the biggest segment of the Indian electorate has UTTER CONTEMPT for the political establishment," the article said. "It's time the 'it's my life' generation stepped out and said 'it's my country' and cast a vote!" Two sunburned American businessmen tossed the magazine aside and sat down. "He's to the right of Attila the Hun, so I hired him," one said to the other, laughing, but soon they turned silent, too, as the waiter delivered a third round of Johnny Walker Black.

The Filipina singers, Sheri-lyn and Rhea, had eight days left on their contract at the lounge. Between sets, they cornered a manager to ask for an extension. "Please, boss. Boss, our visas expire June 1st," one of them begged. "This is home for us now, and for my sister, too. I don't even know where home is, if not here." But Boss was learning wage arbitrage, too. He had in mind a cheaper act, whose performers promised less offstage whining. Sheri-lyn and Rhea eventually returned to the stage and the Tina Turner cover next on their list—"You're simply the best, better than all the rest"—but their shimmies did not fully recover.

Office Tiger had been scouting for new talent, too—forum-shopping, as it's called in the offshore trade. In addition to his Western travels, Joe had been to the Philippines and Sri Lanka, which was offering multinationals tax holidays of four years, as well as cheap labor and streets that a drought had not filled with water queues and dying sheep. This summer, an Office Tiger facility will open in Colombo. Manila next, Joe said, though Randy had his eye on Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, beseeching presentations from the government of Calcutta—a government of Marxists who were undoing labor protections and actively discouraging strikes—went unrequited. This spring, the rupee reached its highest level in years against the dollar. Wages were inching up across India, and in Chennai more than anywhere else.

If outsourcing was "inexorable," as Joe argued, it wasn't quite a deus ex machina. It was driven by human beings who wanted to capitalize on global economic opportunities, and made choices to that end. Joe and Randy loved Harish and their other Tigers, perhaps even as much as the Tigers loved them. Still, as they argued to their clients on Wall Street, judgments uninflected by personal alliances are the most reliable kind. The Tigers often wondered why, after five years, Joe still lived in a hotel. But he, better than they, understood that conceptual attachments are necessarily fungible ones—able, when provoked, to move elsewhere.



• •

In May, India's incumbent political class was thrown out of national and local office by citizens who had been excluded from globalization's spoils. In Tamil Nadu, in a demonstration of unprecedented consensus, voters delivered all forty legislative seats to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's opposition, the "pro-people" party. Although election day was an Indian national holiday, many offshoring professionals, including Tigers, worked straight through it, needed, as they were, in the West. Within the week, the Indian stock market crashed—the biggest one-day drop in the institution's hundred-and-twenty-nine-year history. Like most of the country's meritocrats, Harish was stunned. "Perhaps we cannot have leadership for a modern world until our country has fewer millions beneath the poverty line," he wondered on the evening that the results began to come in.

Joe and Randy, who had no money in the Indian stock market, emerged better off from the political turmoil than their deeply invested Indian competitors. Moreover, Randy had just that week negotiated twenty-five million dollars in financing, after which the firm acquired a British outsourcing rival. Joe and Randy will soon be operating in three more countries. Joe explained, "You've got to diversify your geopolitical risk."

Competition is good, Harish told himself, and change, too, whether or not it feels so at first. He tried to concentrate on a new class of trainees—men and women who were just beginning to learn the meaning of "What's up?" and other American puzzles, and all of whom he wanted to see win. It was far too early for them to learn that their yearning word, "exposure," had another, disquieting definition.

He was tired and had developed a wracking cough—Chennai's polluted air, he said, though family members gently suggested a work schedule antithetical to human health. "I know, it is unlike me," he said on the Friday of election week. "But I am in need of a break." He left his cubicle at eight instead of midnight, waiting patiently in a queue for his backpack to be searched and reassurances made to American businesses that, populist politics notwithstanding, the corporate *omertà* was intact.

Riding his bike home, he could smell the sea but did not stop. Fewer Chennaians were coming to the beach these days. Many of those with televisions were at home watching soap operas, like "The Bold and the Beautiful." Some without televisions had recently been deprived of the shore as well, the government having increased parking fees from five rupees to fifty. The beggar children were left with few prospects to importune. Amusement-park workers turned the handcranks of empty Ferris wheels as much out of habit as of hope.

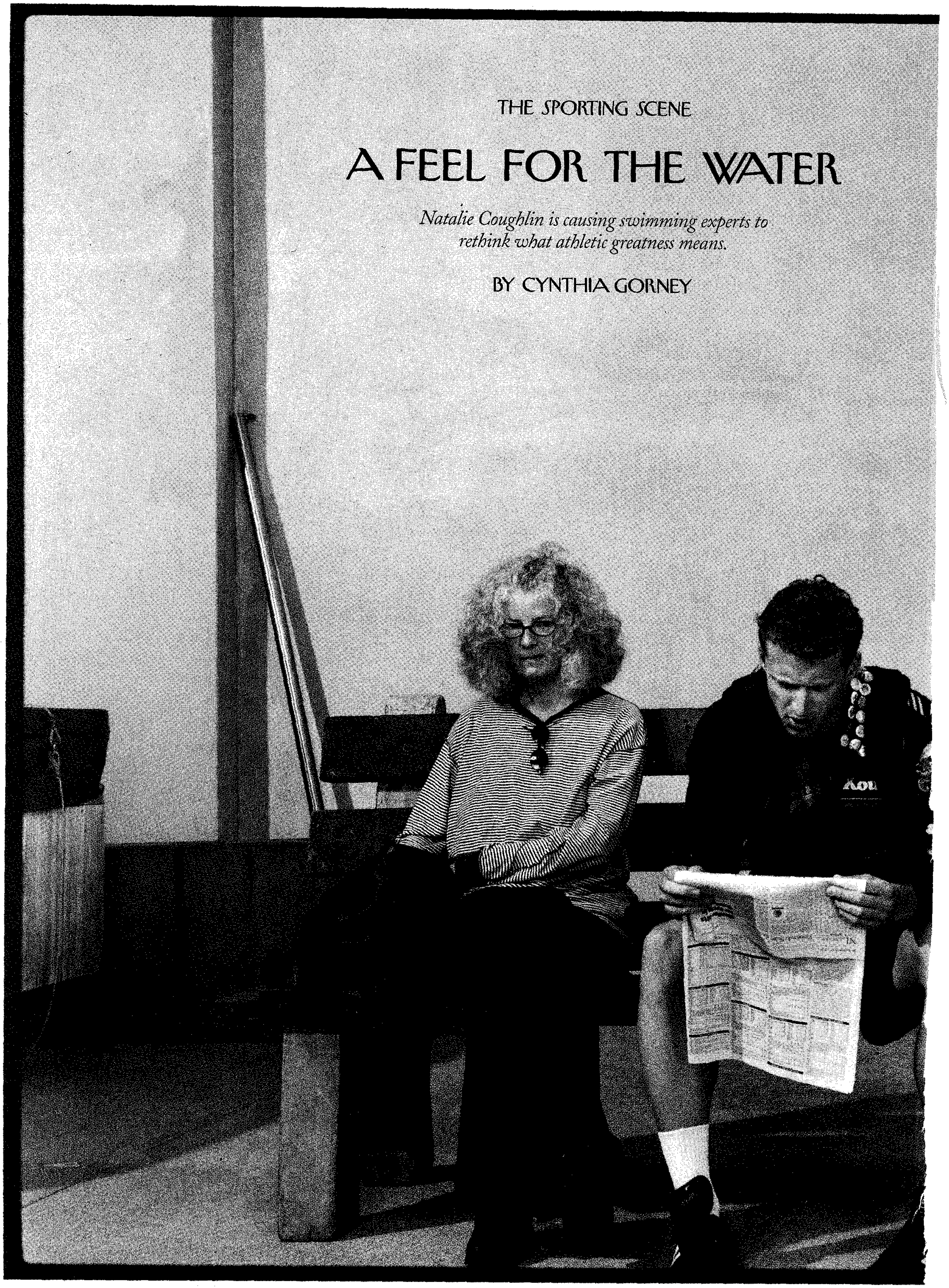
On a previous evening's visit, Harish had turned away from the calls of venders and children to stare into the expanse of the bay. It was the most beautiful time of the evening—the light faint enough to obscure the empty Coke cans and cigarette butts yet sufficient, still, to cast a shine on the sea. "The perfect time and place for thinking about one's life and future, the moment when a person feels free," he had said. But, by May, free thinking about the future seemed less appealing than a spell of thinking nothing at all. This was the burden of trained peripheral vision: sometimes a man noticed what he might have been happier to miss. There were ships that anchored in the bay only briefly, and other ships that sailed right through. ♦

THE SPORTING SCENE

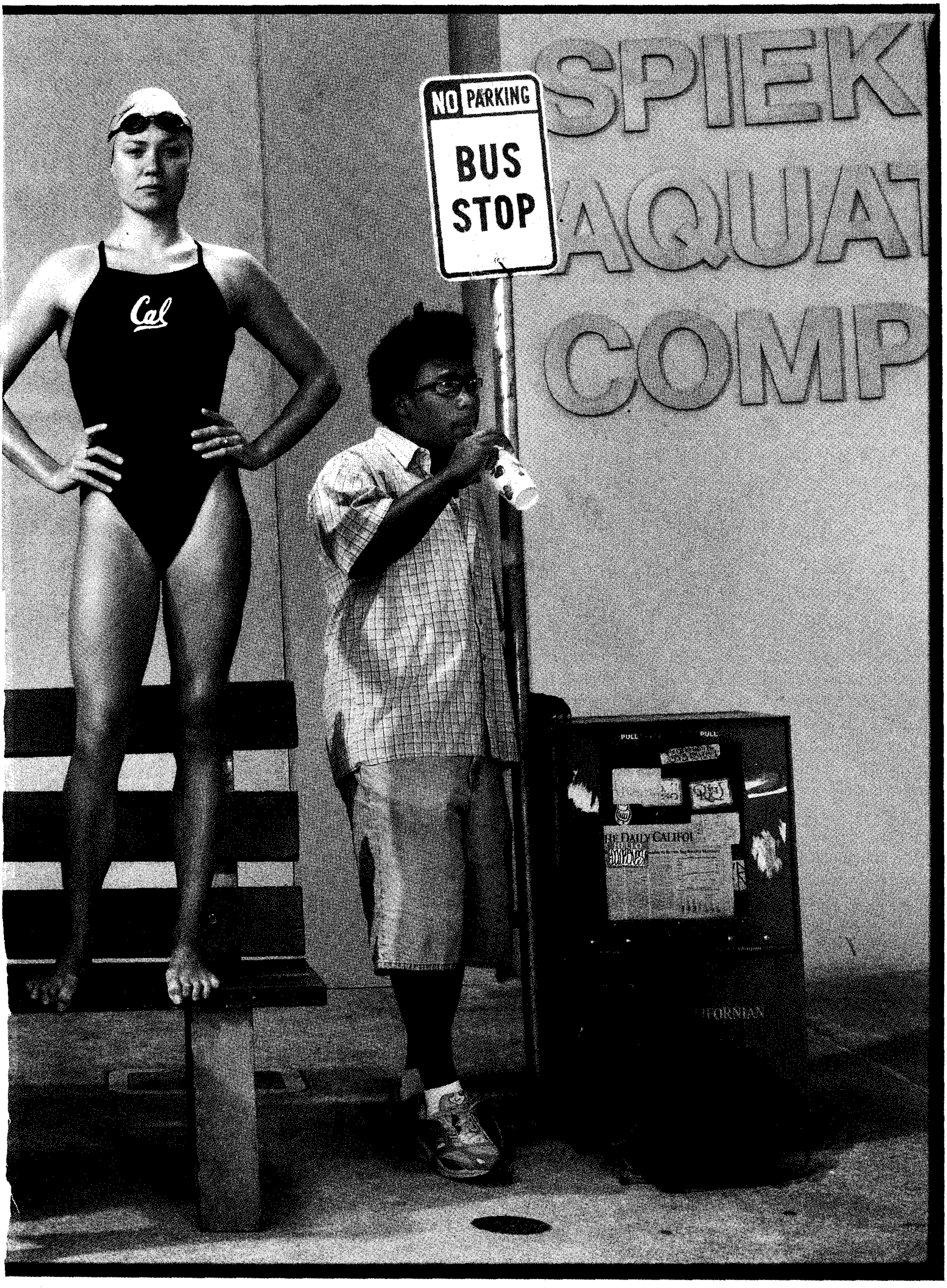
A FEEL FOR THE WATER

Natalie Coughlin is causing swimming experts to rethink what athletic greatness means.

BY CYNTHIA GORNEY



Coughlin has broken six world records and thirty-five national records in all four strokes. But she has also borne the burden


NO PARKING
BUS STOP
SPIEK
AQUAT
COMP
Cal
PULL
PULL
HE DAILY CALIFO
FORNIAN

CORBIS

pectation and shown how fragile a physical gift can be. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

Two years ago, as the summer competitive swim season was getting under way, a former national champion backstroker named Barbara Stark Jordan decided to stop by a meet in Los Angeles to watch Natalie Coughlin race. Coughlin was nineteen then. She had just finished her sophomore year at the University of California at Berkeley, and people who follow swimming had begun comparing her to the greatest racers in history; some weeks earlier, in a flabbergasted account of one meet, the magazine *Swimming World* had described her performance record as "a tsunami that is sweeping everything before it." Jordan swam in the 1952 Olympics, in Helsinki, and has coached and swum competitively throughout her adult life, so she knows exactly how fast certain racing times are—what it means, for example, to have backstroked a hundred yards in 49.97 seconds, which was one of the twenty-four American records that Coughlin had set during her first two years at Cal. "She was swimming so fast that it was hard for me to believe," Jordan says.

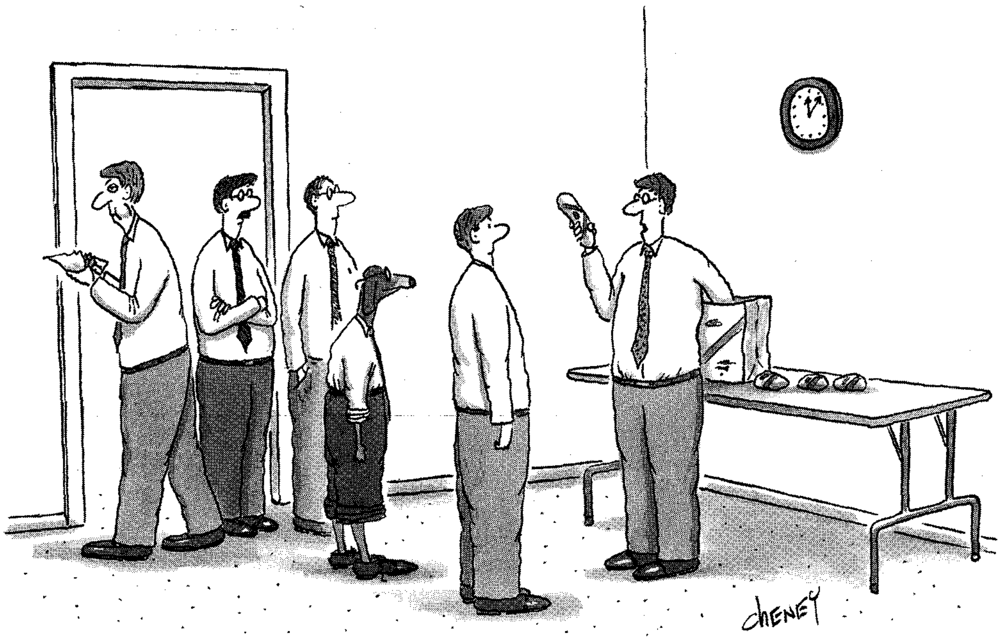
Watching Natalie Coughlin swim in competition can be an unsettling experience. Even in one of the shiny ankle-length speed suits that racers often wear, Coughlin looks small and unimposing as she waits on the pool deck for the summons to the starting blocks. She's slender, but not in a visibly athletic way, and although she's five feet eight she seems shorter. The only time I've ever seen her shoulders ripple, she was hauling up a weighted pulley in a team workout room on the Cal campus; she says that if she lays off practice for more than a week her upper arms begin to shrink. ("That's not me exaggerating," Coughlin told me. "I look like this horrible, horrible swimmer, because I lose strength.") She does have some framing advantages, such as unusually flexible limbs; during her shakeout routine at the blocks she is able to reach both arms straight behind her back, palms out, until her hands touch. There's a loosening-up body shrug she performs, too, hopping up and down a few times on the pool deck, and she whips her bent arms over her head like a motorist trying to flag down help. She proceeds through these moves rapidly, soberly, breaking into a brief smile and waving to spectators when her name is announced. Then, if the race is backstroke, she makes a vertical line of her body and drops feet first into the pool.

Coughlin has broken six world records and thirty-five national records, and, in a sport that trains its stars to specialize in one or two strokes, her records encompass all four—freestyle, butterfly, backstroke, and individual medley, which requires a segment of breaststroke, her weakest stroke. (If she were a baseball player, this would be roughly the equivalent of batting .350, pitching a no-hitter, and setting a stolen-base record, all while playing against the best teams in the world.) But it is the backstroke, Coughlin's signature race, that puts her most memorably on display. The backstroke racing start is both explosive and elegant: swimmers are taught to crouch against the pool wall, fists clenched around the metal handles of the starting blocks, before springing up out of the water and backward into the air. The hips rise, the body arcs, the reaching fingertips cut the water as cleanly as the tip of an arrow, and it is just after this point in the race that Coughlin, typically, vanishes.

I've seen spectators shake their heads in astonishment while Coughlin is underwater during a backstroke heat, or grab each other and gesture excitedly at the pool. The other racers have popped up already and are swimming hard, while the surface of Coughlin's lane remains unbroken; from the poolside risers, if the swimmers' kicking is not creating too much splash, a single streak of swimsuit is discernible deep below, like a glimpse of a river trout. When Coughlin finally appears, first her manicured hands and then the outstretched rest of her, she has almost invariably left her opponents behind. From then on, there often appear to be two separate events taking place in the pool—seven vigorous young women racing furiously against one another, and a languid, contemplative eighth person, her strokes slow and long, a body length or two ahead of everybody else. "It was absolutely beautiful," Jordan told me, recalling the Los Angeles meet at which she first watched Coughlin win. "But, at the same time, I know what effort is going into it. I almost hold my breath with her. How she can power right into the stroke, after being under the water that long, is just unbelievable."

By the time I met Jordan, this spring, at a Cal-Stanford meet in which Coughlin was dispatching her opponents in various distances of butterfly and freestyle, I had heard Coughlin's swimming described not only as beautiful, which is something people frequently say about it, but also as a kayak slicing past rowboats, a ballet performed amid polka dancers, and a symphonic instrument tuned one octave lower than all the others. These were coaches' metaphors, not sportswriters'; in recent months, coaches trying to explain to me what happens when Coughlin is in water have made reference to dolphins, cheetahs, gummy worms, screwdrivers, knives, javelins, bows, and the hockey player Gordie Howe. ("I grew up in Detroit," the Oregon State University women's swim coach, Larry Liebowitz, told me. "You learned to watch Gordie Howe, even without knowing anything about hockey, because the guy just flowed.") The television swimming commentator Rowdy Gaines, who won three Olympic gold medals for the United States in 1984, has said that part of the reason he wants his children with him at the U.S. Olympic Trials this summer is so that they will be able to tell their grandchildren that they once saw Natalie Coughlin swim.

The Trials, which last for a week, begin on July 7th, in Long Beach, California, five weeks before the start of the Athens Olympics. A swimmer's performance at the Trials is his or her sole route to the U.S. Olympic team—the sport's highest glory—and, no matter how exceptional that swimmer's recent record, Olympic spots are promised to only the first two finishers in each event final. The United States produces an abundance of fast swimmers, and many American coaches say that the U.S. Trials are the most competitive swim meet in the world—tougher than the Olympic Games, in terms of over-all pressure from the talented, and, in a way, con-



"Rawhide chew, extra cheese, no mayo, no lettuce, no ketchup?"

• •

tested for bigger stakes. A swimmer who doesn't win a medal at the Olympics can still lay claim to having been an Olympian; there is no national recognition for those who try and fail at the Trials. Among the score of American swimmers who are most likely to win spots on the team this July, two are now widely regarded as once-in-a-generation, potentially-best-ever phenoms. One is a six-foot-four eighteen-year-old from Baltimore named Michael Phelps, who has already competed in one Olympics, broke five world records at the World Championships in Barcelona last summer, looks like a giant inverted triangle of muscle over elongated ropy legs, and has never, as far as is publicly known, had his advance toward international athletic stardom slowed by a single noteworthy setback or disappointment. The other is Natalie Coughlin.

Coughlin was a sensation at sixteen, and then she was not, and then she was again, and what has happened to her in the past six years is sometimes cast, in swimming circles, as a cautionary tale about the burden of expectation and the fragility of physical gift. On the Cal campus, where she is majoring in psychology, Coughlin was indistinguishable this year from all the other sweatpants-clad students hurrying to class with cell phones pressed to their ears, except that during any given week she was simultaneously negotiating an Olympics preparatory training regimen, a backlog of interview and photo-shoot requests, and a full courseload. I once asked her how she was managing it, and she gave me a quick, sharp look before answering. "I had a small version of this in my teenage years, so I learned to get used to it," she said. "Then I fell off the map."

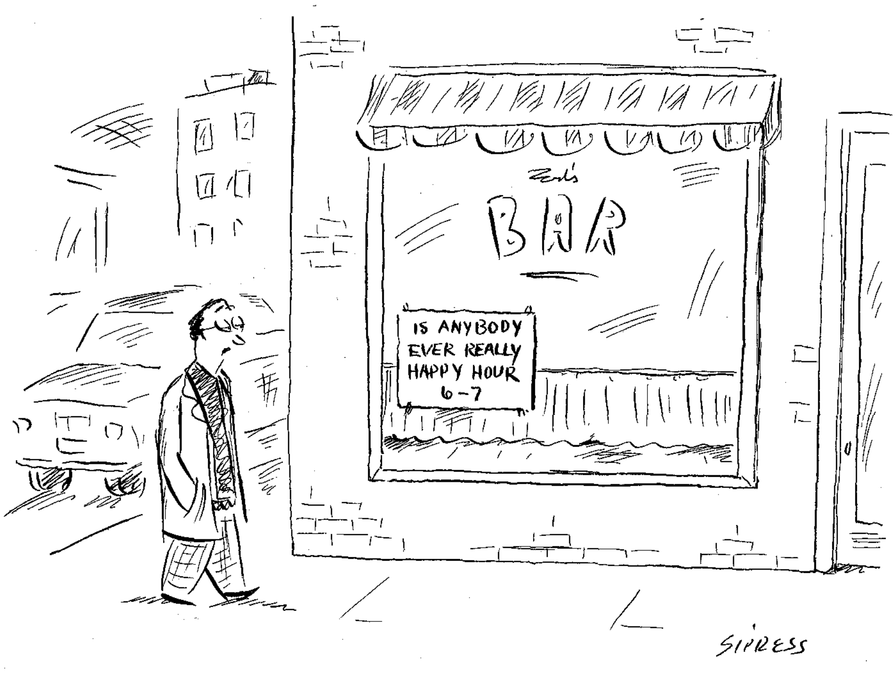
Zennie Coughlin, Natalie's mother, has been asked the same question about her daughter so many times that she has a good-humored stock reply. "I was pregnant with Natalie and swimming in my maternity suit," she says. "So Natalie was swimming before she was born." At that time, the Coughlins lived in Vallejo, a city in the Bay Area, and had a pool in their back yard. Natalie's father, Jim, was a police officer; Zennie was a paralegal. Neither has ever been an especially good swimmer. Jim studied martial arts when he was younger, and still works at staying fit, but there are no high-level athletes anywhere in the immediate bloodline, aside from a grandfather who played football for Notre Dame.

Natalie began swimming in neighborhood clubs and racing in competitions around the age of six. She was enthusiastic and fast, but not enough of either to generate much excitement. Ray Mitchell, a coach, watched Natalie race for the first time when she was about ten; she struck him as a determined thrasher, which is what swimmers call racers who look as if they're at war with the water. Natalie's head was all over the place; she didn't know how to keep her elbows up; her crawl stroke was a lopsided gallop. She won, though. "The kid had one speed," Mitchell recalls, "and that was all out."

Mitchell coached a team called the Terrapins, which was based at a suburban public pool a half hour from the Coughlins' home. Except for the fact that it was named after a Grateful Dead song, "Terrapin Station," the club is a fairly typical component of the national network that grooms pre-collegiate swimmers in this country—some six thousand organizations, including Y.M.C.A.s, swim-club leagues, and municipal-pool-based programs.

The classic swimmers' training regimen makes most other sports look sluggish; by the time the most serious racers enter high school, they are already deep into a year-round, twice-a-day routine that can begin long before sunrise and end after dusk. The Coughlins, who were beginning to think that Natalie might be good enough to earn a college scholarship, were told that Terrapins coaching pushed hard and produced national-event qualifiers. At Coughlin's first big meet after joining the Terrapins, a Junior Nationals competition in Washington State, Mitchell watched her dive in for the thousand-yard-freestyle race—in competition that's a brutally long swim—and tear through the first four laps so fast that she was ahead of pace for the American adult record. She was thirteen years old.

"Everybody was, like, 'What was *that*?' " Mitchell recalls. "She's got a twenty-five-yard lead on the rest of the field. Just unbridled go-for-it, almost like she can't help herself." Halfway through the race, Coughlin had lost the


Zed's
BAR
IS ANYBODY EVER REALLY HAPPY HOUR 6-7
SIPRESS

lead, and by the end she had dropped to mid-pack—but she was cheerful about it, Mitchell says, and during the next couple of days went on to win three events and the meet trophy for single-swimmer performance. "This was the first indication that we had a world-class kid," he says. Mitchell and his Terrapins colleague, a coach named Paul Stafford, had begun putting Coughlin in the distance practice lanes, to keep her interested, and before long she was outperforming the older boys in both speed and endurance. Mitchell says, "She'd finish a hard set, and as soon as she touched the wall she'd look up at Paul with big eyes, like, 'O.K.! What's next?' "

At sixteen, with the Sydney Olympics still a year and a half away, Coughlin had set three national high-school records and was being named as a possible Olympian in a multiplicity of strokes and distances, which would have placed her on a short list of the century's most celebrated swimmers. "That's what really blew us away," Mitchell says. "This kid was getting good at everything." What she lacked was an internal modulator—she swam all out when she was tired, when she was trying something new, when the times didn't matter at all. One afternoon in March, 1999, Mitchell had his swimmers doing butterfly sets: three fast lengths, rest a few seconds, three fast lengths again. "Typical Natalie set, racing the guys," Mitchell remembers. "She's going out incredibly fast. She's doing some amazing times. Then the technique starts to deteriorate. I can see the stroke getting short, she's dropping her elbows, but she's still flying down the pool, and it's one of those sets where the guys are starting to get pissed. And there's a fleeting thought in my mind: I shouldn't let her do this last one."

But he did. That night, Coughlin was awakened by searing pain in her left shoulder. "It was just throbbing like crazy," she recalls. "Hit-your-thumb-with-a-hammer-type pain." She resolved to bully herself through the pain, in the stoic-athlete manner, but at practice the next morning she jumped into the water to help pull the pool cover off and found that she couldn't move her arm. The diagnosis was a tear in the labrum, the cartilage rim around the shoulder joint. For the next fifteen months—long enough to embarrass herself at several important meets and then fail at the 2000 Trials to make the Olympic team in any event—Coughlin was a swimmer in rehab: icing, taking anti-inflammatories, consulting orthopedists, driving herself forty-five minutes each way to physical therapy. When she used her arms in the water, her shoulder hurt and made her feel slow and clumsy; for months at a time, Coughlin spent her Terrapins workouts in what she called the "gimp lane," where she sometimes logged three and a half miles (in a twenty-five-yard pool, that's almost two hundred and fifty laps) using nothing but her kick.

"I cried probably every single practice," she told me. "And crying when you're swimming is bad, because you can't breathe. Your nose is running. It gets worse and worse. Ray called me an emotional basket case. After a few months of this, I was so sick of it I didn't care about anything. It went from 'My goal is the Olympic team in three events' to 'Get the Olympic Trials over with.' If college wasn't around, and I wasn't going to get a free education out of it, I would have quit. I *hated* swimming. I hated the fact that I was so good, and hurt myself, and it wasn't even because I did something stupid—it was because I was trying to be the best I could. And it sucks when you think you're past your peak when you're only seventeen."

The competition-pool area on the U.C. Berkeley campus is a cheerless expanse of water and concrete, flanked on three sides by the athletic building and blocked from the street by a low wall that reads "California." When the fog is in, as it is most summer mornings in Berkeley, everything above the water looks gray. The first time I saw the women's team practice there, it was just after daybreak on a weekday in June of last year. School was out, but a group of women were training through the summer, and in six weeks Coughlin and a former U.C. Berkeley swimmer named Haley Cope were to compete in Barcelona at the Fédération Internationale de Natation World Championships, the biggest pre-Olympics swimming showcase in the world. Teri McKeever, a former University of Southern California swimmer, who has been the Cal women's swim coach for twelve years, was striding along the pool deck as I arrived, her curly hair crammed into a baseball cap, a clipboard under one arm, belting out numbers: "One-fifty-six seven. One-fifty-four two. Lauren and D you've got to be under one-fifty-f last two, O.K.? Nice job, top now, with fifties." . Santa Bar- ughlin had met years. Within a at Cal, Coughlin ational titles, broken

Four years ago, when McKeever was recruiting Coughlin for the Cal swim team, she wasn't sure what to expect. Even injured, Coughlin was one of the prime collegiate prospects in the country; coaches knew that she had decided against surgery, sticking with her grueling rehab regimen, and that her shoulder pain was gradually subsiding. But the months of recovery had beaten something out of her. "When I started coaching her," McKeever recalls, "I just thought, Here's someone who's had a tough relationship with the sport, in the sense that it gave her a lot of things, and then her body turned on her. She liked me, I liked her, she was smart, she'd be great for the team. But she was just . . . a good swimmer."

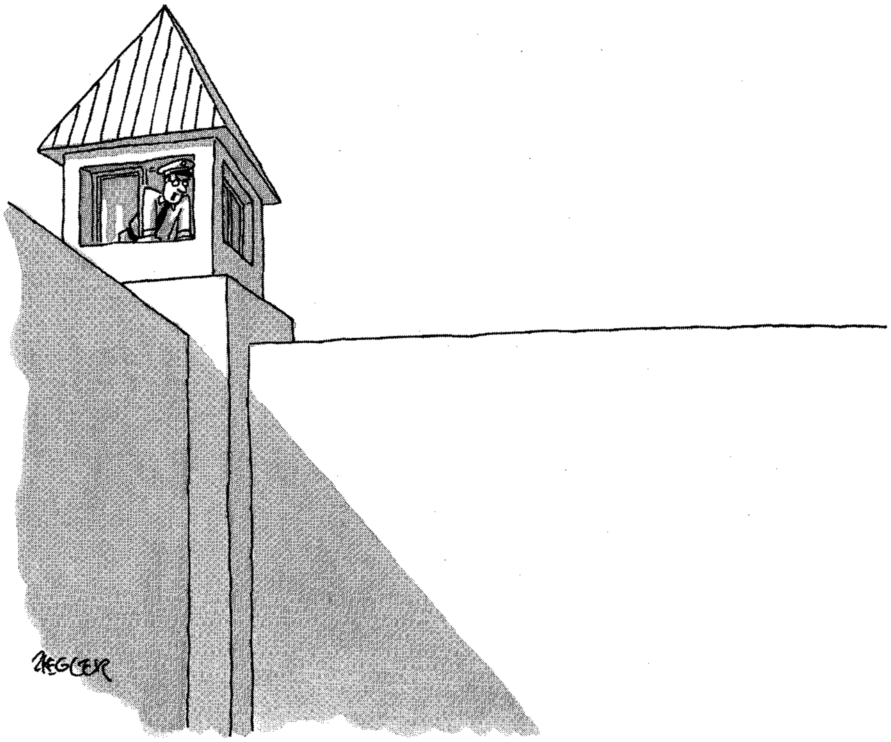
McKeever says that her initial instinct, once Coughlin was a freshman on the twenty-four-woman squad, was to back off and let her swim. But McKeever observed Coughlin carefully during practices, gathering ideas, and one day during that first season she invited an Oregon-based stroke coach named Milt Nelms down to Berkeley to look over the new team. Nelms, who has worked with many of the best teams and swimmers in this country and in Australia, is also a sculptor, with a technical eye for musculature. Standing on the pool deck with Coughlin before him in her swimsuit, Nelms realized that he was staring at the vestige of her injury—"this remarkable structural asymmetry," he says. "One half looked smooth, kind of normal but athletic. And the other side looked almost like a caricature. You know how they draw, like, Marvel Comics and stuff, how there's a dramatic emphasis on the muscle structure? Like that. Her neck and the top of her shoulder were really prominent. We asked her to turn around, and her spine was just curved around one shoulder blade and up into her neck. And we're standing there, looking at each other. This poor girl. So we asked her to swim."

Watching Coughlin in the water, Nelms says, made him think of a wounded animal that has had to figure out how to compensate in order to survive. "Like a coyote that's chewed its leg off in a trap," he says. "When you have a trauma like that, your nervous system creates movement patterns to avoid utilizing whatever's hurt. It was like she was bucking on one side, and maintaining her movement on the other—like jamming a skateboard forward on one side and kind of coasting on the other."

McKeever and Nelms called Coughlin out of the pool, and what he remembers most vividly from that afternoon is the way she listened to their suggestions—ease up on the aggressiveness of her arm stroke, soften the angles, make certain to breathe on both sides rather than turning her head in only one direction—and then jumped into the water and swam as though she had absorbed everything they had said, completely and all at once. Never before or since, Nelms told me, has he seen an élite swimmer respond so effectively to coaching guidance: "I work with athletes, and with issues like that, for weeks."

Nelms believes that Coughlin is a physical genius in water, and when I asked him what he meant he had to think about how to explain it. In many respects, a swimmer who is good enough for the Olympics is like any other champion athlete—exceptionally well coördinated, exceptionally competitive, and willing to devote enormous effort both to over-all conditioning and to training for a single sport. But most of us learn to swim before we're old enough to appreciate just how daunting and counterintuitive a proposition rapid swimming actually is. The body has to propel itself horizontally, for one thing, which is weird for human beings. Gravity has stopped working in the familiar way it does on land. ("You no longer have a platform," Nelms says. "Plus, since your lungs are your aerobic chamber, it's like a water-polo ball is trapped inside your body, so there's a part of you that falls *up*.") The surroundings are lethal, if they're managed incompetently enough, and the racer in particular has to contend with the fundamental paradox of acceleration through water: the faster a person tries to go, the harder the water pushes back.

Coaches know that this push-back factor, or resistance, increases exponentially as a swimmer's time drops, and that each small time improvement demands significantly more physical effort. Fast swimmers manage this resistance by both exploiting and eluding it, pulling against the thickness of the water while simultaneously slithering the body through. The more water they can "hold," as swimmers say, and the



"You, down there, celebrity prisoner No. 849, stop regaling the exercise yard with tales of former show-biz glory."

more efficiently they slither, the farther each stroke propels them; that's why so many of the swiftest racers are not only strikingly graceful but also look as though their limbs are moving more slowly and easily than everybody else's.

There's no visible fight with the water at all when a great swimmer is racing, and although coaches and biomechanics experts have learned a lot in recent decades about how this works—nearly every development in modern swimming, from stroke changes to the invention of the low-drag bodysuit, is essentially a refinement in managing the resistance of water—they also know that some people just seem to feel water, as they move through it, in ways that others cannot. This is meant literally, as in some heightened physical perception of the water around the body, and without it, in competitive swimming, nothing else much matters. "The greatest athlete in the world, the most genetically gifted, can come into your program as an eight-year-old," says John Walker, the U.S. national swim team's assistant technical-support director. "But, if they don't have that feel for the water, the least genetically gifted eight-year-old who *has* that feel for the water is going to beat them."

Nelms says that what sets Coughlin apart from other world-class swimmers he has known is her uncanny ability to connect coaching suggestions instantly to that feel—as though there were a direct route from her ears to her muscles and nerve endings, with no detour through the thinking brain. Both Nelms and McKeever regard this ability as central to Coughlin's speed. McKeever recalls talking briefly to Coughlin, moments before the start of one freestyle race during her sophomore year, and giving her a new suggestion for improving her turns at the wall. "Then she just *nailed* it in the race," McKeever says. "It looked like a cannon had shot her off the wall. I've never had a coaching experience like this before, where you'd never even talked about something earlier, and then—*bang!*—they nailed it."

But there is also, famously, the Natalie Coughlin kick. Coughlin's miserable injury year, as it turned out, delivered her to Cal with the most aggressively practiced kick in American swimming. She has tremendous lung capacity—when she was nine, and ill with bronchitis, her X-rays showed such oversized lungs that technicians initially told her mother that there must have been a mixup in the files—and McKeever began working with her on the best way to develop the kick and her breath control to maximum effect, especially during the strategically crucial underwater segment permitted at the start of each lap. Underwater swimming, when it's undulating and rhythmic in the way that most closely mimics a fast-moving dolphin, is now understood to be more efficient than any surface stroke—so much more so that, after a nineteen-eighties American backstroker began winning internationally by spending most of his race time underwater, swimming officials came up with a new rule requiring racers to surface, and start swimming the old-fashioned human way, within fifteen metres of takeoff from the wall. Even with the fifteen-metre rule in place, though, mastering both the undulation and the powerful push-off gives a swimmer a deadly advantage, especially in American collegiate competition, which is conducted in what are called short-course pools—twenty-five yards or metres long, half the length of the long-course pools used in the Olympics. A swimmer reaches the wall twice as many times, in a short-course race, and so gets twice as many push-offs. This is why short-course records are faster than long-course records, over the same distance, and why there was such enormous potential for an eighteen-year-old swimmer who could combine lung power, flexibility, and intuitive streamlining with a monstrous kick.

McKeever had one additional coaching directive for Coughlin, a particularly unorthodox one in the high-discipline, high-yardage culture of competitive swimming. Once in a while, McKeever insisted, Coughlin was to ease up and stay away from the pool for a few days: get out of Berkeley and go surfing (she describes herself as a "decent" surfer), or spend some time with her boyfriend, a U.C. Santa Barbara swimmer whom Coughlin had met during her Terrapins years. Within a year of her arrival at Cal, Coughlin had won five national titles, broken American collegiate records in the backstroke and the butterfly, been named N.C.A.A. Swimmer of the Year, and won a backstroke gold medal at the 2001 World Championships, in Japan. By the end of her junior year, she had won every national honor that American swimming offers, several more than once. She had broken world records in the short-course individual medley, the short-course backstroke, the short-course butterfly, and the long-course backstroke. The asymmetry in her musculature had disappeared, Nelms says, and she had become the only woman in the world ever to swim a long-course hundred-metre backstroke in less than a minute—59.58 seconds, to be precise, which Jim Coughlin maintains is the only one of his daughter's performance times he has ever been able to remember. "She started having fun again," her father says. "Teri made it fun."

By the time I arrived in Barcelona for the start of the World Championships, last July, the preview brochure had already ceded two of the races to Coughlin. "In backstroke the races will be for second as Natalie Coughlin (USA) will be favoured in the 100 and 200," the brochure declared. She had seven events to swim, more than anybody else on the American roster; the headline of a Spanish newspaper I picked up described Coughlin as *la polivalencia*—"the versatile one"—and suggested that she might leave the World Championships with seven gold medals. Her parents, her younger sister, and her grandparents had all come from California for the championships. Her grandmother, who likes to wear bright garments for Coughlin's events, had packed homemade red-white-and-blue vests and spangly visors for the family to wear in the stands.

All season, Coughlin's races had been very, very fast; in dual meets, Cal against another school, her collegiate conference win-loss tally, so far, was forty-three to zero. It had been eight months since she'd broken any world records, but in March she had set an

THE MIDWAY POINT OF VACATION

American record for the hundred-yard freestyle, and in early summer, while Coughlin was training on campus and competing occasionally, I'd watched her deflect sportswriters who seemed crestfallen that she hadn't made history again while they happened to be watching. ("Yes, I was really happy with it." "No, I don't have to change anything. I just have to keep doing what I'm doing.") Not yet twenty-one, she was mastering the art of public composure: she had helped teach swim clinics; she had mugged underwater for TV cameramen; she had taken up fancy cooking, and had been flown to New York for a "Today" celebrity-chef bit in which she prepared a pork tenderloin and a persimmon risotto on camera while chatting as amiably as a Food Network host. Once, during a summer meet at which a long line had formed for Coughlin's autograph, I saw a young girl so overcome by Natalie worship that when her turn came she froze, unable to move or speak, her eyes welling with tears. As the girl's mother darted forward to intervene, Coughlin smiled, unwrapped from her waist the gold-medalist's towel she had just been given, and placed it in the girl's hands.

The first hint of trouble in Barcelona came during one of the opening events of the meet: a hundred-metre butterfly that placed Coughlin and the three-time Olympian Jenny Thompson—who, at the age of thirty, was back in competition while attending Columbia's medical school full time—in adjoining lanes. It was a morning qualifier, and the risers were nearly empty of spectators; the top sixteen from these heats would proceed to an evening semifinal. Thompson won, by just under a second, which at that level of competition is a considerable lead. I heard surprised murmuring in the press seats, as Coughlin hurried away for her warm-down swim. When she reëmerged some hours later for the butterfly semifinal, she had been demoted from lane four, the traditional mid-pool placement for the swimmer with the fastest qualifying time, and assigned a lane closer to the wall. She came in third, behind Thompson and a Polish swimmer. One of the American sportswriters turned to me, when the heat was over, and remarked, "Natalie looks like shit."

That night, at the press conference, Coughlin was distracted and subdued. The evening had actually ended well for the American women, who won their first relay; Coughlin had swum the opening leg, but Thompson had heroically anchored it home, and when the reporters' attention turned briefly to Coughlin she talked mostly about admiration for her teammate's decision to come out of retirement. "Every time she swims, she's getting better and better," Coughlin said, smiling. Then somebody asked her about rumors that she was sick. She said that she had run a fever the night before, but she sounded dismissive about it. "I think the first day, also, is rough," Coughlin said. "The first swim, I was in a bit of a daze."

The next morning, early, was the women's hundred-metre backstroke. Coughlin's celebrated world record, 59.58, loomed on the scoreboard above each round of qualifying-heat swimmers, nobody coming anywhere near it: 1:04.94 for the Israeli; 1:02.93 for the Canadian; 1:03.16 for the Finnish girl, who had been touted as a serious threat. Finally, the last heat was called, and here now was Coughlin, in the center lane in the fastest group, crouching, springing, disappearing, reaching—except that something was wrong. The Spanish swimmer was pulling ahead of her. Then the Chinese swimmer pulled ahead of her, and

Coughlin's measured stroke quickened, as though she were grabbing at the water; then the Croatian pulled ahead, and the Zimbabwean, and as the women touched in at the wall the scoreboard times lit up and the arena grew quiet. Of the sixty starting competitors in the hundred-metre backstroke, Coughlin had come in twenty-second, at 1:03.18. She had not even made the semifinals cut.

This time, the reporters were yelling into their cell phones as they ran toward the roped-off passage where the swimmers were supposed to give post-race interviews. The atmosphere was agitated and sad, as though a famous racehorse had just collapsed on the track. An Australian coach was shaking his head and saying, "Damn shame, a champ like that," and after a long wait, and many swimmers expressing bewilderment in many languages, Coughlin came out. She had tears in her eyes. "I've had a fever," she said. "I thought it was getting better. But I think last night's swims took a toll on me. It's one of those challenges I have to face. I'm working with a doctor." Somebody asked if she was disappointed, and she said of course she was, but she didn't say it snappishly; nor did she volunteer any of the details that we were to learn later, such as the fact that she hadn't slept for two days, and had lain in her hotel bed that morning alternately sweating and shivering. (The fever peaked at nearly a hundred and three degrees.) She just stood there, red-eyed and lank-haired and polite, and said that at least not making the backstroke semifinal would allow her to rest for the next couple of days. That night, she swam the hundred-metre-butterfly final, which Jenny Thompson won, in 57.96, setting a new World Championships record. Coughlin came in last.

Natalie Coughlin explained her personal racing strategy to me this way, one afternoon a few weeks after returning home from the Worlds: "Go out hard. Come back hard." She chuckled as she said it; she had just finished recounting her feverish backstroke heat—"The whole thing just felt like crap. It was slow, it was difficult, it was obvious that everybody else was ahead of me"—and when I asked why she decided to swim again that night, knowing that she was sick, knowing that she was likely to fail, she shrugged. "It's a personal thing," she said. "You're competing not only for yourself but for your country. For me, scratching is almost cowardly, like being afraid. I didn't want to do it, but I couldn't get any worse than eighth. I did my best. My goal in that race was just to go out as hard as I possibly could, and see how long I could hold on. I got a pretty good advantage off the start—I have a really fast start—and then died. Died miserably. It was incredibly painful. Just burning, lactic acid, legs, arms. It's awful. But you get that feeling a lot, even when you're doing well sometimes. So that really hurt. I gave everything I had in that fly."

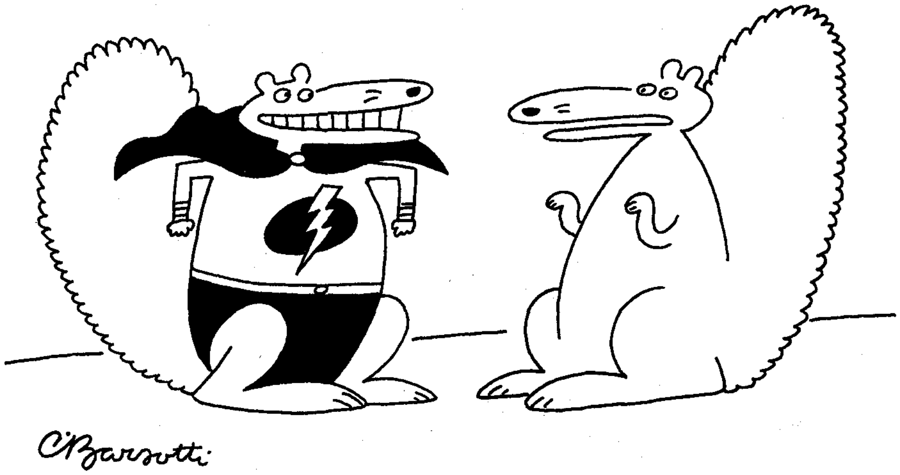
"We're not your real parent corporation."

In competitive swimming, as in track, numbers are ubiquitous, precise, and tyrannical. Swimming people like that about the races, the cold impartiality of the timing clock, and when I was following Coughlin's pre-Olympics season I occasionally made the outsider's observation about how relentlessly the system drives its best young athletes toward a single instant on a single day. This is intrinsic to Olympic sports, of course, but because so many swimming events are over in times like one minute three seconds and eighteen one-hundredths of a second, the compression factor struck me as almost unbearable: five or ten years of twice-a-day training, all those laps, all those drills, all those hours in a pool—"the cement prison," I once heard a college coach say—all reduced to the final fraction of a second in which one outstretched hand reaches the timing touch pad first.

I expected coaches and swimmers to scoff at me for brooding about this, but they didn't. "You see how thin the line is in our sport," a staff member from U.S. Swimming, the Colorado-based governing body for the sport, said to me three days into the Barcelona meet. "No matter what Natalie does over the next twelve months, all that counts is what happens in Athens next year." He didn't sound particularly happy about it, either, and after a while it began to seem to me that part of Coughlin's effect on the swimming world has been to set off one of those periodic reëxaminations of exactly what athletic greatness means. "Statistically, most people are swimming at relatively the same times they did thirty years ago, so people who are anomalies in this culture, like Natalie, really jump out at you," Bill Boomer, a longtime coaching adviser to the U.S. swim team, told me. "There's something special going on here, and it isn't velocity. You can't just look at her and say, 'Gold medal.' You can't just look at her and say, 'Multiple medal.'

You have to wander around Natalie. You have to walk in a circle around her and see the possibilities for everyone—for the next five-year-old. If Natalie is normal, and we're not normal, how are we going to make people more normal? She's swimming like she was in the womb, and we need to teach that."

A lot of technical work goes on at U.S. Swimming—the use of cameras and computers to calibrate racers' exact stroke cycles, for example—and one experimental new project is the collaboration of two engineering professors, one at Rutgers and the other at George Washington University, both experts in fluid mechanics. Deconstructing precisely what happens when a solid object moves forward in water is much harder than you might imagine, especially when the solid object contains the minute, pulsing variations of a living creature's muscles and skin. No engineer has ever been able to build an underwater vessel as efficient or maneuverable as a fish, and when the computers at G.W. were put to the task, recently, of analyzing a single swimmer's stroke—using video clips to create a computer simulation, and then displaying all the stroke-created underwater eddies and turbulence that a human eye would be unable to see—the job took the computers hundreds of hours of processing time. "And these are not your garden-variety computers," Rajat Mittal, the professor supervising the G.W. research, told me. "These are souped-up machines."



"You're a hell of a squirrel, but you're still a squirrel."

I asked Mittal what a comparably time-consuming simulation might be for his souped-up machines. "Gene sequencing," he said. "Galaxy formation." Both Mittal and I are lap swimmers, dedicated but unencumbered by any natural talent, and he seemed to understand why I was so taken with the idea that a computer might find human movement through water as complex an enterprise, in its own modest way, as the creation of new galaxies. One of the video clips that Mittal is currently feeding into his simulation program is of Natalie Coughlin, sinuous as a ribbon, underwater dolphin-kicking seventeen times in a row down the length of a pool. Should it ultimately prove useful as a training aid, one result of this research might be computer-calculated instructions for the mechanically perfect stroke, the one that science has determined will produce the lowest turbulence, the optimal arrangement of invisible eddies, the swiftest route through the water. But the things that a computer is least equipped to factor in—drive, vulnerability, the mysterious relationship between racer and water—are the things that Coughlin makes swimming people talk about. "It's like listening to Yo-Yo Ma," Boomer says. "When you listen to him play, you don't understand how he does it. We don't understand how she does it. In my forty years of coaching, I've seen glimpses of that any number of times. But she's right up there at the top."

Coughlin's last races as a University of California swimmer took place one weekend in March, at the 2004 Women's N.C.A.A. Championships, in College Station, Texas. I heard a fair bit of speculation about her in College Station: about how many records she was going to break this time; and whether her short-course invincibility would hold up under the long-course requirements of Olympic competition; and which sports agent would win the wrangling to handle her endorsement deals the day her N.C.A.A. eligibility ended. But this was a school-boostery meet, each event preceded by elaborate warring cheers from the teams, and when Coughlin occasioned a ripple of disappointment by setting only meet records in her first two races—no world or national marks, in other words, just the fastest times in the history of the N.C.A.A. Division I Women's Championships—the moment passed. In her third individual race final, the two-hundred-metre backstroke, she was ahead of her own world-record pace for the first hundred and fifty metres, and the announcer and spectators were screaming with excitement as she flip-turned into her close. She had gone out too fast, though, and, with the relays and preliminary heats, she had already raced eleven times in three days, and in the last lap two swimmers ripped by her. It was the only race that Coughlin had ever lost in an N.C.A.A. championship, and at first I thought my parting image of her was going to be the grace with which she had lost it: she embraced the winner, an Auburn University junior named Kirsty Coventry, and trotted straight to the warm-down pool to keep swimming, slowly, the slender wrists lifting and dipping, the long fingers fluttering beneath the surface of the water. When she rolled onto her back, her face looked serene. Then, an hour and a half later, Coughlin swam the lead-off leg for Cal in the four-hundred-metre freestyle relay, the final race of the meet, and set a new American freestyle record: a hundred metres in 52.81 seconds. Nobody had time to applaud, as the race was still under way, and Coughlin pulled herself quickly and unceremoniously from the water to sit cross-legged atop the pool deck, barely visible amid the other swimmers, cheering on her team. ♦

FICTION

ELSIE BY STARLIGHT

BY JOHN UPDIKE

It was his father, an accountant for a textile mill, who had urged Owen to get a practical, scientific education. Floyd Mackenzie’s experience of the Depression had been that engineers were the last people to be fired; he had seen it happen. “The kid needs to latch on to something practical,” he announced. “He’s in danger of dreaming his brains away.” The boy’s brains, he reasoned, could be best engaged by machinery, if not by the giant knitting machines, as long and heavy as freight cars, whose ill-rewarded servant he himself had been, then by some other kind of construction (bridges, dams, dynamos) whose indispensable utility was more obvious to the world than that of strict, honest accountancy. In a materialist age, matter must be trusted.

A university in far-off Massachusetts, a so-called Institute of Technology, offered Owen a scholarship. His being a student from a small rural high school in Pennsylvania helped his chances with the bestowers of admissions and student aid. The university was by an artificially broadened river, the Charles, across from a half-derelict city, Boston, that held at the summit of a cut-down hill a sallow gold dome from under which the Commonwealth was governed. In the early fifties, prewar shabbiness still ruled Cambridge and Boston, yet they were cities of youth, of students everywhere. Sailboats and rowing sculls rippled the river, a glittering sporting site bluer than the Schuylkill, which had been black with coal silt. M.I.T. seemed to Owen heroic in the grand and mazy scale of its vast central building: a series of buildings interconnected by passageways, each segment known not by a name but by a number. The main entrance, numbered 77 Massachusetts Avenue, led into Building 7, where six great pillars and a high circumcameral inscription to “INDUSTRY, THE ARTS, AGRICULTURE, AND COMMERCE” upheld the limestone dome. The fabled Building 20, the “plywood palace” on Vassar Street, had sheltered secret radar researches by which, it was said, the Second World War had been won. Underground infusions of government and corporate wealth continued to enlist scientific intelligence in the Cold War; in the analysis center and the digital computer laboratory, rooms entirely taken up with arrayed cabinets full of wires and vacuum tubes, and fed by punched cards, linked, rumors claimed, all the radar stations around the United States and calculated missile trajectories that a hundred savants with pencils could not compute in a hundred years.

JENNY LYNN, “COUPLE”

M.I.T. was a male world, its administrators and instructors all but exclusively male, and a number of them military men. Though the great postwar tide of veterans was receding, uniforms were still common on campus. Of six thousand students, no more than a hundred and twenty were women, and half of these were graduate students. Phyllis Goodhue stood out, then, as a member of a decided minority, which was outnumbered sixty-six to one in the endless corridors—floors of tan terrazzo and doors of frosted glass strictly numbered in black, even the women’s lavatory, “3-101-WOMEN.” She was yet more noticeable among the springtime sunbathers in the Great Court, a large sheltered lawn, between Buildings 3 and 4, that overlooked the new segment of Memorial Drive, its double row of sycamore trees, and, in their gaps, the sparkling, playful Charles and the rosy low profile of Back Bay. Most of the sixty female undergraduates were not lovely—driven grinds with neglected figures and complexions, heads down in the hallways as they bucked the tide, trying to blend in with the boys—and Owen had to look twice at Phyllis to verify that she was. Was lovely.

True or false? Was twice necessary? No: from the start, through that river-chilled, sleepless, and miserable first year, in which his head was being stuffed with, among other rafts of basic data, introductory circuit theory (Kirchhoff’s laws and Thévenin’s and Norton’s theorems, step function and impulse response, resonance phenomena and conjugate impedances), whenever Owen passed Phyllis in one of the thronged corridors his own electromagnetic field changed, by an amount as subtle but as crucial as the difference between $d\phi$ and dt. There was a numbness only she inflicted. Her presence transformed the odd-shaped cement-paved spaces scattered among the buildings west of the Kendall Square subway stop, where bleary students loitered over gossip and cigarettes.

She held her tidy head erect on its long neck. Her straight hair, the mixed blond of half-damp sand, was gathered into a ponytail in back with a rubber band. In the front, bangs came down to her pale eyebrows, which blended with her skin; her brows and eyelashes were almost invisible. She wore no makeup, not even lipstick, and smoked poutingly, her cheeks deeply hollowed on the inhale and her exhale delivered with a certain dismissive vehemence, upward from the side of her mouth. In her offhand, underclad (the same dove-gray cloth coat and dirty tennis sneakers all winter) glamour she came to represent Cambridge for him—aloof, stoic, abstracted, pure.

She looked like no girl from Pennsylvania, not even the fancy ones from the Main Line. Elsie Seidel, his high-school girlfriend, the daughter of a country feed-and-hardware merchant, had always been smartly turned out, with polished penny loafers and ribbed knee socks and sweeping skirts and broad belts in the New Look style, and with tortoiseshell barrettes gleaming in the bouncy light-brown waves of her hair. And plenty of lipstick, maroon lipstick that looked black in Kodak snapshots and rubbed off on his mouth so that afterward it stung to get it all off with spit on a handkerchief. He didn’t want his mother to see; his mother didn’t want him to go with Elsie at all, though the girl was respectable, more respectable locally than Owen’s family, who were newcomers to this end of the county and to the school district. The district encompassed several valleys and included families whose first language was still Pennsylvania Dutch. Elsie herself spoke with a “Dutchy” care—her voice seemed older than she was. There was a country simplicity to her, a well-fed glossiness. The first time they kissed, in the intermission of a school dance, Elsie didn’t make the anxious pushing mouth that Alice Stottlemeyer had during spin-the-bottle but somehow let her lips melt into his, at this warm spitty spot where their bodies joined. She was a short girl, in a sweated-up taffeta dance dress, and he was six feet tall at seventeen, so she had to tug down at him to keep his face tight to hers; she wanted to kiss more, there behind a broken Coke machine, where the overhead fluorescent light was flickering. Her compact eager body molded itself to his; he remem-

THE PAVILION
AT McLEAN HOSPITAL

Unparalleled psychiatric evaluation and treatment. Unsurpassed discretion and service.

617.855.3570 or pavilion@mclean.org
www.mclean.harvard.edu

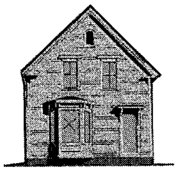
A major teaching facility of Harvard Medical School and an affiliate of Massachusetts General Hospital

JOHN CHRISTIAN
DESIGNERS & CRAFTSMEN

Your Names & Date
David & Melissa
5 31 03
14K GOLD FROM $490 - 3 DAY RUSH AVAILABLE - FREE CATALOGUE
RINGBOX.COM 1-888-646-6466

Here, there is Healing-
When science &
spirit meet...
Does your
doctor know?

"Doctor, Be Well" ISBN 1-4107-1454-3
A book for patients and their doctors
1-888-280-7715 www.drbewell.net



THE YELLOW HOUSE
Rockport, Maine
imyim.com

LONDON FLATS
PARIS PROPERTIES - COTSWOLD COTTAGES
Short Term - Privately owned
THE LONDON CONNECTION
TOLL FREE PHONE: 888-393-9120
FAX: 801-393-3024
WWW.LONDONCONNECTION.COM
E-MAIL: SALES@LCPM.NET
LONDON CONNECTION

Changing Minds, Changing Lives
Weight Loss
Diabetes Treatment
Lifestyle Change
Supportive Environment
STRUCTURE HOUSE™
1-800-553-0052 www.structurehouse.com

bered hearing how Carol Wisniewski had let herself be fucked by Marty Naftzinger standing up in the narrow space between the rec hall and the hosiery mill, and saw that it could be done.

Not that he and Elsie ever—in a word they never used between them—fucked. He was too smart for that, too anxious to avoid wasting his one life. He knew that fucking led to marriage and he was not ready for that. In the heat and urgency of that first kiss, he recognized that Elsie had had her eye on him, as the phrase went—he had been an exotic, aloof arrival at the school, and somehow the idea of him had wormed its way excitingly into her head. So between them there was always this tilt, this unbalance: she had desired him before he knew what was up.

Owen would afterward associate Elsie with the inside of a car—its stale velour, its little dim dashboard lights, its rubber floormats and chill metallic surfaces. Chilly at first: after they'd been driving around for hours, the heater made a torrid alcove in the dark. On dates, they took his parents' stuffy prewar Chevy. His father was generally home from work by six, and Owen was granted the car for the roaming that is, in common American wisdom, a teen-ager's right.

At first, there was only kissing, on and on, eyes closed to admit behind sealed lids a flood of other sensations, an expansion of consciousness into a salty, perfumed space quite unlike the hushed and headlong vault of masturbation. In the dark seclusion between cool tight sheets, his parents' muttering having died away, he would seem for some seconds to stand on his head, having discovered with his left hand a faithful mechanism impossibly sweet, a clench that took him back to infancy, its tight knit of newness before memories overlaid the bliss of being. Into this private darkness had come another, another seeker, and what was being found, clumsily yet unstoppably, was a core self explored by another consciousness. Elsie was both witness and witnessed. Her eyes were the wet, honey-tinged brown of horehound drops. By the particles of light that entered through the windshield, he saw the dark dents of her dimples when she smiled, and the side of one eyeball gleam as she studied him across a gap that closed in a few seconds. Huddled beside him on the front seat, a bench seat in that era, with her back gouged by the knob of the window crank and her calves and ankles roasted by the heater, she seemed cupped to receive him, a nest of growing permissions. With each date, she gave him an inch or two more of herself that he could claim as his henceforth; there was no taking back these small territories. Beyond kissing, there was so much to touch, so many hooks and tricks among the catches and aromatic coverings, there in the shelter of the car, which sometimes was her car, for, though a year younger than he, she also had a driver's license, and when his poor old family Chevy was under overnight repair or commandeered for some adult evening errand, she would bring a car of her family's, her mother's green Dodge, or even her father's new deep-blue Chrysler, with its V-8 engine, to pick him up, at the farmhouse where his mother had not without a struggle accepted that Elsie had become his "girl," whatever that meant as the world embarked on a new half century.

Some of those evenings when Elsie did the driving, pulling up in an impressive machine, she would be invited in, into the little house's front parlor. Smartly dressed in this setting of declining gentility, Elsie spoke to Owen's mother with a lively courtesy. Her honey-brown eyes flashed; her red lips smiled. Uneasily standing by, in a flannel shirt whose sleeves were too short, in scuffed laced shoes that looked oafish compared with Elsie's polished penny loafers—much on view as she smartly crossed and recrossed her plump legs—Owen felt like a baton being passed.

When the young people, these social observances discharged, achieved freedom in a car of Elsie's, it seemed perverse, after the movie or the miniature golf was behind them and they had found a parking place, to have her seated on his left instead of on his right. Come at this way, she felt like a strange girl, with whom he must begin from scratch. Their chins and mouths made angles opposite from the usual, and his hands coped with reversed routes.

"Should we switch?" she asked, when he remarked on this strangeness. Her voice came out breathier, lower in her throat, than the polite, Dutch-flavored voice she used with his mother and the teachers at school. Her lipstick had already begun to smear and flake. Her face was waxily lit by a street lamp half a block away; they were parked in a spot he knew from childhood walks, at the back of the old Dairy Queen lot on Cedar Top. Other times, they would park up by Shale Hill, near what had been the Victory Gardens, on a dirt road made by recent developers. Always, as the scope of her permissions widened, he searched for even safer spots, where the police would never come up and shine flashlights in their faces, as once had happened, behind the long low sheds of the old farmers' market. As she sat high behind the wheel of her father's expensive car, her mussed hair caught fire in stray loops and strands from the distant street lamp.

"Let's," he agreed. "If you don't mind my sitting behind your father's wheel."

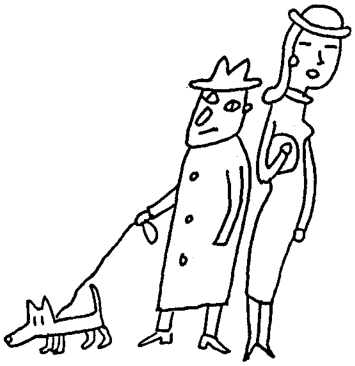
"I don't mind, Owen. I don't like it poking me in the ribs all the time. I don't see how you can stand it."

"Elsie, when I'm with you I don't notice such things. Here I go. I'll get out and you slide over."

Thrusting himself into the public space outside the automobile, where adult morality pressed down from the stars, he opened and shut the Chrysler's passenger door (it made that sucky rich rattle-free sound) and scuttled around the broad chrome bumper and white-walled rear tires hunched over, for he already had an erection. Even behind his fly it felt scarily as if it might snag on something, until he settled behind her father's steering wheel, which wore a suède cover. The tang of the new-car smell was warmed into freshness by the heat of their bodies. As he slid across the front seat, wide enough for three, into the space where she huddled, the distant light illumined her blurred face and a small pearl earring and the fuzzy wool of her short-sleeved angora sweater. She let him slide the sweater up and sneak a finger into her bra and stroke the silky skin there, the gentle fatty rise of it. Though Elsie was plump, her breasts were small, as if still developing. When he had advanced to taking off her bra and pushing the sweater way up, her chest seemed hardly different from his own; a breast of hers in his hand felt as delicate as a tear bulging in his eye. One night, parked up by the Victory Gardens, where the street lamp was closer than on Cedar Top, he watched raindrops on the windshield make shadows on her chest, thin trails that hesitated and fell as his fingertips traced and tried to stop them, there, and there. She had dear little nipples like rabbit noses. She let him kiss them, suck them until she said, in her breathy, un-Dutchy voice, "Ow, Owen. Enough, baby," and touched his head the way the barber did when he wanted it to move. Sitting up, he made circles with his finger and his saliva around her nipples, softly round and round, loving the sight of them so much he felt dizzy, as the parallel shadows of the raindrops faintly streaked her chest and the backs of his hands.

She never touched his prick. It was too sacred, too potent. They pretended it wasn't there, even when their bodies straightened at the angle permitted by the front seat and its heater-crowded foot space and he held her buttocks through her rumpled skirt and pressed himself rhythmically against her, all the time their mouths kissing, until he came, came in his underpants, where the dried jism made a brittle stain he later picked off with his fingernail, hoping his mother wouldn't notice it when she did the wash.

His sense of sexual etiquette was primitive, gleaned from the way men and women acted in the movies up to their huge closeup kiss at the end, and from enigmatic dialogue in a few books, like "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "Forever Amber" and "A Rage to Live" and "The Amboy Dukes," that he had looked into, and from a pornographic poem that Marty Naftzinger's younger brother, Jerry, a runty curly-haired kid in Owen's class, could recite, if you paid him a dime. But it was developed enough to ask, after one such climax against her compliant body, "What can we do for you?"



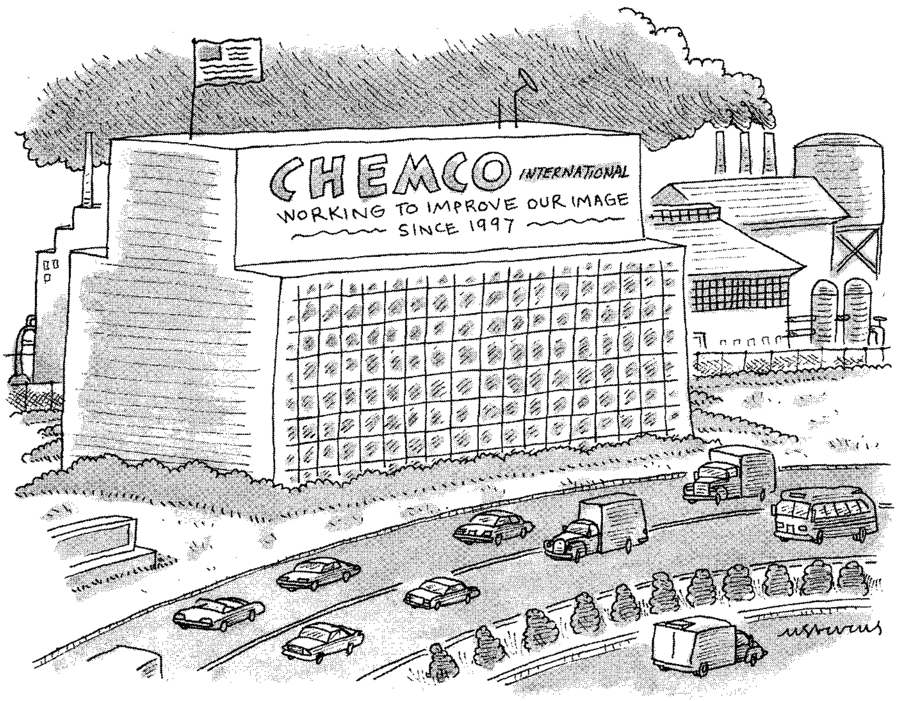
This embarrassed her. Elsie liked to pretend that what had just happened hadn't happened at all. "How do you mean?"

This made him shy in turn. "I mean—just holding still for me isn't enough, is it?"

She said, "We can't do more, Owen. There might be consequences you don't want."

Yet there was more, both knew it, and as his senior year ran out they groped to find it without committing sins so dark and final that their lives would be forever deformed. Elsie was less afraid of this than he; he refused to test how far she would let him "go." It had become their way in the car for him to bend over and kiss the silky warm inner sides of her thighs and then press his mouth as far up as he could into the warmth, her warmth. At first, she resisted, pushing at his shoulders, and then came to expect it. In those days, even teen-age girls wore girdles: the crotch of her underpants was guarded by edges of stiff elastic, and though she shyly edged her hips forward in the car seat his lips could not quite reach the damp cotton. Not that he knew enough to make her come with his mouth, or how girls came at all. The pleasure was his, in being this close to a secret, in having her yield it up to him, even her fragrance, which was strong enough at times to exert a counterforce, a wish to pull his face away. But he loved it there between her legs, and how hot and sticky his cheeks grew against her thighs, and the graceless awkwardness this maneuver asked of her, still wearing her knee socks and loafers.

The summer before he went off to M.I.T., their experiments took on a desperate edge. She knew he was slipping away; the baton had not been passed after all. Owen had got a summer job on a surveying crew, tending the target marks and chopping brush out of the sight lines. Elsie had gone to a Lutheran camp in Ohio, where she was a counselor, for six weeks. He would get a ride home with the crew from far corners of the county and have to be fetched when he could not hitch a ride; he would come home exhausted and dirty, and tried not to think that college in a foreign region was swooping down upon him



• •

and would carry him away—for good, he both hoped and feared.

After Elsie returned from Ohio, it seemed almost too much work to take a bath in the farmhouse's one tub and go out again, into the dark. He and she needed the dark now. With the freedoms they had granted each other, they needed such privacy that even a distant street light or the remotest chance of a cop with a flashlight and barking voice could not be borne. Where could they go, with their maturing needs and fears of eventual desertion? His summer had not been so distracted that he had missed the implication, in her letters from camp, that she had found companionship with the boy counsellors, or the gossip, when in August she had returned, that while he was cutting brush in future housing developments she was to be seen at the township's public pool, lounging in a two-piece bathing suit on a towel on the grass, with another boy, a boy her age, in her class, who would be there with her after September.

"My father owns a hundred acres of woods not that far from Brechstown," she told Owen, after an hour of directionless cruising one evening. "There's an old road in. Nobody ever comes there."

"Sounds perfect," he said, but did it? He let her direct him, turn by turn, on narrow roads he had never driven before. He was frightened at the road entrance, with its "No Trespassing" sign and rusting remains of barbed-wire fence; there was a sandstone boulder that with his summer muscles he rolled five feet to the side so they could get by. They were in the fragile old black Chevrolet; his father, mocking his own poverty, called it "the flivver." As branches raked the creeping car's sides, Owen felt guilt, yet less than if it had been her father's Chrysler, which was kept so shipshape and simonized. A litter of cans and wrappers in the headlights revealed that others had been here before, also pushing aside the boulder in their strength of desire. The road was rough; the old car rocked. Suppose they broke an axle or got a flat tire? The scandal, the disgrace would stain his life forever.

"Isn't this far enough?" he asked. He felt a trap closing behind him.

"It goes in for a long way but gets worse," Elsie admitted. He turned off the ignition and the headlights. Such darkness! It pounced upon them with an audible crackle; it locked around the windows as if the car had plunged into a black river. As his eyes adjusted, he saw a star or two high in the windshield, in the spaces between the great still trees overhead. Occasional headlights on the dirt road a half mile away twinkled. Elsie's face was a mere glimmer in the cave of velour, rubber, shaped steel, and shatterproof glass. His lips found hers, and they were full and moist, but the old melting, one mouth into another, met impediments, things he couldn't put out of his mind. Suppose the Chevy didn't start when they wanted to go? Suppose he couldn't back it out on this overgrown road, the bushes a solid mass behind them and he without the machete he used on the surveying crew? He felt life, a silent vegetable life, enclosing them, on this her father's land, this man present in every leaf and reaching branch. Owen was still young enough to invest the darkness with spying presences; they distracted him when he should have been purely bent on the treasure at hand, in the deepest privacy he and Elsie would ever know.

It was August; she wore shorts and no girdle. As their embraces gained ardor and flexibility, her crotch came into his hand as if rising to it. She lifted her hips on the car seat so he could slide her shorts down; through his clumsiness her white underpants came off with them, and Elsie did not try to grab them back. She seemed to stretch, elongating her belly. Even in this darkness, he saw wet gleams upon her eyeballs, like faraway fireflies, and the pallor of her long belly descending to a small soft shadow. Frightened of that shadow, he turned his attention to her breasts; with a touch more practiced than with her underpants, he unhooked her bra and tugged up her short-sleeved jersey. She crossed her arms and pulled the jersey the rest of the way, up over her head, with the bra. Her hair, cut shorter this summer so she could be in and out of the lake at the Lutheran camp, bounced, releasing a scent of shampoo. The bony smooth roundness of her shoulders gave him the shock of her nakedness; he hid his face against the side of her neck, saying, "Oh, God. I can't stand this."

Her cheek tensed as she smiled. "Now you, Owen," she breathed into his ear. "Your shirt."

Quickly, not wanting to let go of her for a second, he pulled it off, wishing he had bathed more carefully, for the smell of his armpits joined that of her shampoo and her skin in the close air of the car. He could see more and more, as if light were leaking from the patches of sky between the trees, shedding glimmers into the woods, where faint noises were reviving and becoming less faint. He kissed her breasts, trying to be delicate, trying not to bite as the nipples grew hard, while she pressed into his ear a voice that seemed made up, enlarged and rehearsed, like something in the movies: "Owen, I used to take off my clothes in my room and walk around looking at myself in the mirror, wishing you could see me."

"You're beautiful—amazing," he told her, meaning it, but, as if her voice had swabbed out his ears, he now heard other things, whispers and stirrings around them, on the other side of the glass and metal. From somewhere not too distant there was a hoot, an owl or possibly a signal from a murderous, demented gang that lived here in caves and came out at night. *Suppose the car doesn't start?* he thought again. It often didn't, in rainstorms, or on cold mornings, his father frantic, flooding the engine in his panic, so the wearying starter turned it over, uncatching, *cooga cooga*. "Did you hear something?" he asked Elsie.

She had left her loafers on the gritty floor of the car and had risen up, bare now even to her feet, to kneel on the seat beside him, stroking his face as he tongued her breasts; even in his state of growing terror he marvelled, holding her tight, at the *give* of a girl's waist, at the semi-liquid space below the ribs and then, behind, the downy hard plate at the base of the spine and the glassy globes of her buttocks, smooth into the cleavage, all of it unified like the silvery body of a fish, all so simple and true, the simple truth of her, alive in his arms. He heard the distant hoot again. Something rustled near the car tires. She felt his mouth losing interest in her nipple, and began to listen with him. Behind the skin between her breasts, her heart was beating. "I don't think so," Elsie answered, her voice losing its moviescreen largeness and becoming small, with a childish quaver.

For reassurance she added, "He says nobody ever comes here except in hunting season." But she, too, must have seen the cans and wrappers in the headlights, evidence of others. *He:* her father, the owner, all around them, hating Owen, what he was doing to his daughter, striving in every twig and trunk to eject the two of them. They listened and heard a noise so faint it could have just been saliva rattling in their held breath. Owen's hands began to move again, gathering her tender taut nakedness closer to him, his fingertips finding a touch of fuzz in the cleavage behind. He wondered how to get his head down to kiss that soft shadow he had glimpsed; it seemed shyer, gauzier than what he had seen in dirty photographs and drawings, the few he *had* seen. His prick was aching behind his fly, and her hand dropped and, the first time ever, began fumbling at his belt buckle to release it, its imperious pressure, its closeted sour smell.

But he had spooked her, he had spooked them both, and the desire that dominated him, bare-chested though he was, was the desire to escape, to see if the car could start and he could back it up that narrow road without hitting a tree or a deep hole. Her father's land, and her nakedness in it like a shout: Owen was vulnerable, criminal even—trespassing, and she a minor. He must restore her intact to society. The rustling near the tires became a sudden thrashing, a distinct lunge of the unknown.

"Elsie," he whispered.

"What?" Perhaps expecting some avowal, some earthy plea.

"Let's get out of here."

She hesitated. He heard her heart beat, her breath whistle. "It's up to you," she decided in the mannerly voice that she had used with his mother. Then, catching his mood, she whispered, "Yes, let's."

Often afterward, he would remember details of this hour (her shorts and underpants in one sweep; her gleaming eye-whites; his sense of her slithering into the space above his head like a silken kite, like an angel crammed into the upper corner of a Sienese Nativity) and regret his lack of the boldness that would have let him linger with her gift of herself, and taste it, and let her continue undoing his pants. But his nerves had poisoned their privacy. Naked or not, she was a person, and now a frightened one. His retreat was cowardly, but he felt brave and cool, successfully managing its details. He started the engine—thank God, it started, drowning out all those other sounds—and backed down

ADVERTISEMENT

TRAVEL NOTES

You're invited to explore these exciting itineraries from The New Yorker's travel advertisers.

SWAN HELLENIC
Discover Swan's effortless style of exploration; cruises that feature a variety of famous and lesser-known ports; and inclusive prices with no hidden costs. Receive a 45% savings when you book by September 30, 2004. To request our new brochure with complete cruise itineraries and cabin pricing, contact 1-800-877-SWAN or visit swanhellenic.com.

SWAN HELLENIC DISCOVERY CRUISING

HALF MOON
In celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, Half Moon is offering its Take Me to the Moon special, starting at $499 for an oceanfront room. The package includes three meals, beverages, champagne, gym, tennis courts, bicycles, transfers, and service charge. For more information, call 877-HALFMOON or visit halfmoon.com.jm.

HALF MOON
• MONTEGO BAY •

If unable to reach telephone listings,
Send requests, with date noted,
to The New Yorker Reader Services,
4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036.

© 2004 by The Condé Nast Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 040628

the overgrown road by the wan glow of the backup lights while branches scraped metal and Elsie scrambled into her clothes. He would have backed up right onto the paved road, not bothering to roll back the boulder, but she said, in a voice whose calmness sounded stern, "Owen. We should put it back the way we found it."

Her father's precious land. This had been her show, he realized. He got out angrily and in the glare of his own headlights heaved the rock into place, for the next trespassers. "Sorry, sorry, sorry," he said when the Chevy was safely running down the highway, to Brechstown, where she lived. "I chickened out."

Elsie said, after lighting a cigarette, "You're more citified than I am. Woods don't frighten me. My father and uncle hunt in the fall. There are no bears or anything, not even bobcats anymore. I felt safe."

"You should have told me that while we were in there."

"I *tried* to distract you, to keep you interested."

"You did, you were stunning. I loved it. You."

She was silent, putting his jerky speech together.

He told her, "It's just as well. We might have fucked."

Not a word they used, with others or between themselves: it was a kind of offering. But she held her silence. It occurred to him, his face heating in a blush, that he hadn't been prepared even physically, with one of these rubber things he had seen years ago up by the abandoned Dairy Queen.

She at last spoke: "I wouldn't have let you, Owen. I intend to be a virgin for my husband. It was just, like I said, I wanted you to know me, to see me, as I see myself."

"You were beautiful. Are beautiful, Elsie."

Was she crying? "Thank you, Owen," she brought out. "You're a nice person."

Too nice, was the implication. Still, he couldn't blame himself. Her body like that of a slithering cool flexible fish in his arms had been a revelation, but it had been revelation enough for one night.

Were there other nights to follow? There might have been, but when he looked back, trying to recall each underlit detail, it didn't seem so. Their futures came upon them fast. Elsie had another boyfriend for her senior year, and married yet another boy, one she met at the local Penn State extension. Surprisingly, they left the region, settling in the San Francisco area. If Owen wouldn't take her away, another would.

They must have driven around that night, burning up gas, letting their heartbeats slow down, trying to talk into place what they had learned about each other and their own lives, before he drove her home to Brechstown. Her house was up a long crunching driveway, an old farmhouse like his own family's but fully, fussily fixed up. A new addition held a two-car garage below and a family room above, with a TV and built-in loudspeakers and furniture that all matched. The addition was covered in aluminum siding; the original core was built not of sandstone but of limestone, because that was what the earth yielded here, near the Chester County line. When he kissed her goodnight, again there was not that melting together, though he took the liberty of stroking a breast as she leaned toward him. Owen felt he had failed, but no one could take from him his stolen treasure, how far Elsie had "gone," leaving him with a kind of home movie his mind could run and rerun in a rickety projector, not just in bed but in inward moments of daylight, bits and pieces of her barely seen—her shampoo, her heartbeat like a stranger knocking on the other side of a door, the surprising elastic give and stretch of her waist.

So Phyllis Goodhue was not his first love interest, though it must be admitted that even for the innocent fifties Owen was an innocent. Having been taken too deep into the woods by Elsie, he saw sex as something to be deferred until he had made space for it—made money enough not to feel squeezed. His freshman year had been squeezed by his efforts not to fail and fall back into the farmland and his disconsolate family.

Returning to Cambridge as a sophomore, Owen found the squeeze slightly lessened; he was beginning to know the ropes. In September, he ventured across the river to see the Braves play the Phillies; he rooted for the Phillies but kept it to himself, in the shirtsleeved crowd whose skimpiness foretold the move of the franchise to Milwaukee within a year. The symmetrical eight-team leagues of his boyhood, as immovably fixed, he had thought, as the Ten Commandments, were beginning to shift and slide across the country. On a Friday night in November, he and a pack of five other future engineers took the subway at

"Did you make all these 911 calls?"

Kendall and walked up Cambridge Street to the Old Howard at Scollay Square, which itself would soon disappear. Before a somewhat sardonic all-male audience of sailors and geezers and college boys, a glittering woman with an implausible cinnamon-red upsweep strutted in fewer and fewer clothes and ended up on her back on a velvet chaise longue, kicking her legs in the air in a sufficient pantomime of orgasm, while the drums in the orchestra pit pounded. Under the harsh stage lights, well-used, half-amused women went through routines that did not seem lifeless to Owen; in feathers and breakaway ball gowns and hourglass corsets and ruffled garters and satin heels, these women had the pure life of dreams, dreams sent up from the pit of oneself, fantastic enactments of what was at bottom most real.

A New England daintiness and wit leavened what in Pennsylvania, in the milltown brothels and dives as sensed by a child of the region, had a sullen, suety heaviness, slightly rancid. Up here, where the Puritans had left their traces in the white steeples and prim brick architecture, sex was tricked up, if not altogether banned. Boston's highly evolved civic morality prescribed certain limits on costume. Pasties on the nipples, G-string on the pubis, high heels on the feet, tiaras on the head, bright paint on the face—all mitigated the simple glimmering nudity that Elsie in her innocence had offered him one night. Nudity, New England seemed to say, was too serious, too vulnerable, to commodify; only goddesses in marble or Mother Eve in crabbed engravings could flaunt it aboveground. Underground, there were stag films in frat houses, projected to uneasy hooting, starring actors and actresses whose sagging, pouchy, wistful, and impotent humanity roused scorn in the viewers, young and inexperienced as they were.

In his sophomore year, after a summer of the surveying crew and a few unsatisfactory dates with Elsie, who was more guarded and sparing of herself now that she was a Penn State freshman, Owen returned in his daydreams to Phyllis, without ever having spoken a word to her. But she turned up in a class that he, too, was taking—Non-Linear Impedances as Power Modulators. ♦

Immerse yourself in a language.

Rosetta Stone® software is the fastest, easiest way to learn a language. The reason is our award-winning Dynamic Immersion™ method. Thousands of real-life images and the voices of native speakers teach you faster than you ever thought possible.

Don't force-feed yourself endless grammar exercises and agonizing memory drills. Learn your next language the way you learned your first — the natural way. Order by August 31 and save 10%!

"Stupendous...the juxtaposition of text, sound, and picture is masterful."
The Boston Globe

"I have learned more in two weeks with Rosetta Stone than I did in 2 years of college Spanish!"
Mona,
Takoma Park, MD

RosettaStone.com/nyd074

IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three
uno, dos, tres
un, deux, trois
一、二、三
eins, zwei, drei
אחת, שתיים, שלוש
jeden, dwa, trzy
एक, दो, तीन
moja, mbili, tatu
일, 이, 삼
een, twee, drie
один, два, три
uno, due, tre
unus, duo, tres
یو، دوه، دری

in any of these languages

English • Spanish • French • Chinese
German • Hebrew • Polish • Hindi • Swahili
Korean • Dutch • Russian • Italian • Latin
Pashto • Arabic • Japanese • Portuguese
Indonesian • Thai • Vietnamese
Turkish • Danish • Welsh • Swedish

RosettaStone®
Language Learning Success

The guaranteed way to learn.

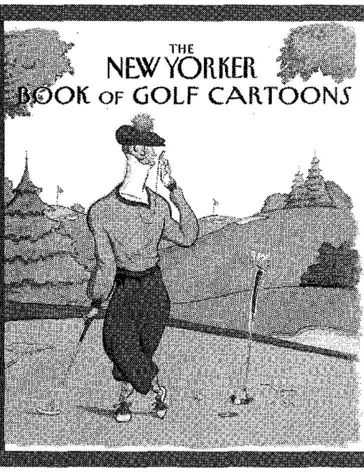
Rosetta Stone will teach you a language faster and easier than other language-learning methods. We guarantee it. If you are not satisfied for any reason, simply return the program within six months for a full refund!

Learn what NASA, the Peace Corps, thousands of schools, and millions around the world already know: Rosetta Stone is the most effective way to learn a new language!

SAVE 10%!
Order by August 31, 2004.
(Use promotion code nyd074.)

Level 1 CD-ROM
~~Reg. $195~~
Now $175.50
Level 2 CD-ROM
~~Reg. $225~~
Now $202.50
Level 1 & 2 CD-ROM
~~Reg. $329~~
Now $296.10

1-800-306-3618



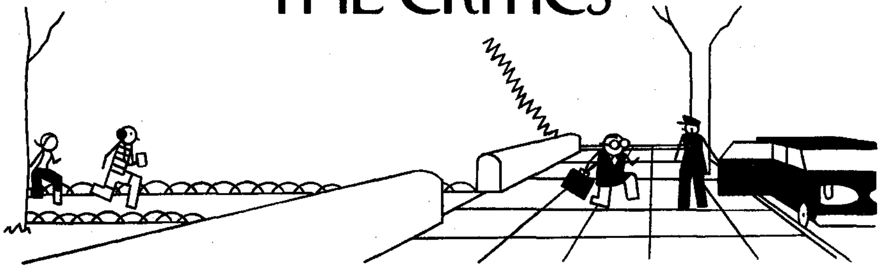
THE
NEW YORKER BOOK
OF GOLF CARTOONS

More fun than
a hole in one!

AVAILABLE WHEREVER
BOOKS ARE SOLD

Bloomberg PRESS www.bloomberg.com/books

THE CRITICS



RICHARD MERKIN

BOOKS

RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT

The making and unmaking of Dylan Thomas.

BY ADAM KIRSCH

To begin at the beginning: In October, 1914, when the Swansea schoolmaster David John Thomas decided to call his newborn son Dylan, the name was virtually unknown, even in Wales. D.J., as he was called, had found it in the Mabinogion, the collection of medieval Welsh tales, where it is the name of a minor character—"a fine boy-child with rich yellow hair." Florence, the boy's mother, had her doubts about the odd name: the correct Welsh pronunciation, which the family used, is "Dullan," and she worried that other children would tease him by calling him "dull one." Later, when broadcasting on the Welsh service of the BBC, Dylan Thomas had to instruct the announcers to say "Dillan," the way he himself pronounced it.

By 2003, according to Social Security records, "Dylan" had become the nineteenth most popular boy's name in the United States—just below "James." For the parents of many of those American Dylans, the name probably evokes the teen heartthrob on the TV series "Beverly Hills 90210"; for their grandparents, it will always recall the singer formerly known as Robert Zimmerman. But those later Dylans only borrowed its aura of brooding, youthful rebellion; in the most literal sense, Dylan Thomas made his name.

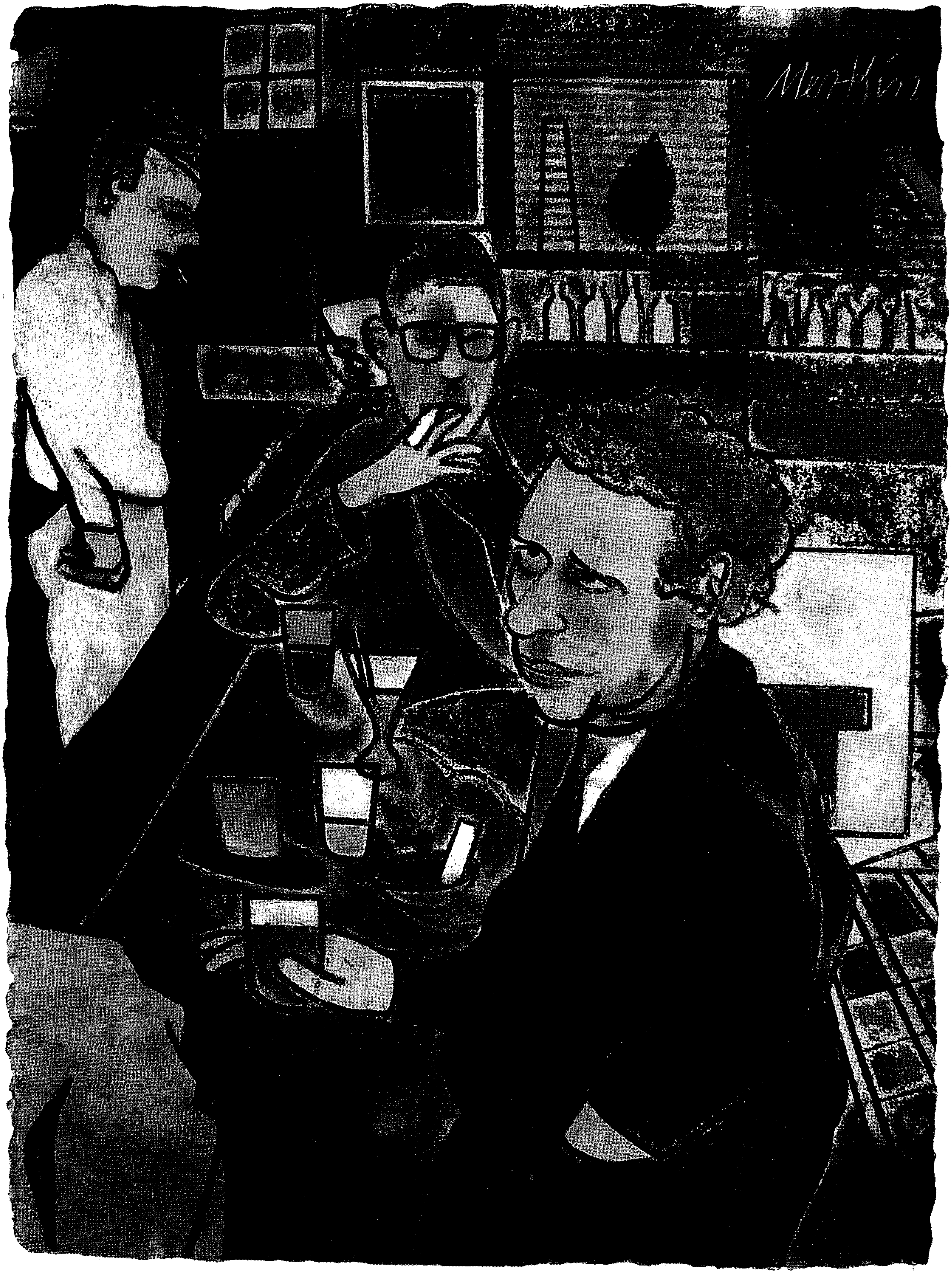
To achieve that level of fame as a poet demands more than talent, or even genius. From Byron to Sylvia Plath, it has also required scandal, tragedy, and early death. And the glamour of Dylan Thomas has always been peculiarly potent in the United States, because the last acts of his tragedy were played out here, in Manhattan. His Stations of the Cross are the Chelsea Hotel and the Ninety-second Street Y, the White Horse Tavern and St. Vincent's Hospital—where he died of alcohol poisoning on November 9, 1953, just after his thirty-ninth birthday. Wales was Thomas's great subject, and England made his reputation; but it was America that created his legend.

The question, raised by many at the time and fiercely debated ever since, is whether America also killed him. During his four American tours, between 1950 and 1953, Thomas put on a better show than any visiting writer since Dickens. His rich, honeyed baritone, and a dramatic instinct honed by years of broadcasting, made him a powerful reader of his own and others' poems. But what drew crowds from New York to San Francisco, and on every college campus in between, was not just the performance; it was the possibility that Thomas would finally, irreparably, crack up. Elizabeth Hardwick remembered how professors and students alike were mesmerized by his alcoholic high-wire act: "Would he arrive only to break down on the stage? Would some dismaying scene take place at the faculty party? Would he be offensive, violent, obscene? These were alarming and yet exciting possibilities." As Andrew Lycett writes in his new biography, "Dylan Thomas: A New Life" (Overlook; $35), Thomas "exhibited the excesses and experienced the adulation which would later be associated with rock stars."

What makes him unique among poets, even famous poets, is this distinctly modern and American cast of his celebrity. He took part in the savage transaction of stardom: his reckless self-indulgence satisfied his audiences' fantasies, and his destruction satisfied their moralistic envy. Many people shared an obscure sense of gratification that Thomas had died young, as a poet should. That way, he could be mourned in the grand style, like Adonais: ". . . the loveliest and the last, / The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew." Or, as the critic Alfred Kazin wrote in his journal when he heard the news, "Dylan. How much light goes out with the passing of our wizard . . . he embodied the deepest cry of poetry, he was our young singer!" The death of an old singer—a Yeats or a Frost—offers less scope for plangency.

Those closest to Thomas worried about this loving American vampirism. Caitlin, his wife, complained about many things he did—Caitlin's volcanic temper, and the battles it provoked, is no small part of the Thomas legend—but she complained most loudly, and with most justification, about his visits to America. When he came back from his third trip, in the spring of 1953, she vowed not to let him return. As Thomas wrote ruefully to John Malcolm Brinnin, his American host and lecture agent, Caitlin told him, " 'You want to go to the States again only for flattery, idleness, and infidelity.' This hurt me terribly. The right words were: appreciation, dramatic work, and friends." But Caitlin was more right than either of them knew: the next trip turned out to be the fatal one. As she wrote in her memoir, "Leftover Life to Kill," "Nobody ever needed encouragement less, and he was drowned in it."

"Don't encourage him," of course, is what we say about a child who misbehaves; and, while Thomas's misbehavior took lethally adult forms, it was unmistakably a kind of childishness, a testing of boundaries. Lycett's thorough and well-written biography—rich in anecdote, if short on psychological and literary penetration—shows that Thomas's entire life was an experiment in how much he could get away with. Probably



What drew crowds to Thomas's readings wasn't just the performance; it was the posssibility that he would finally crack up.

the most dramatic example—missing from Lycett's account, it can be found in Paul Ferris's 1977 biography—concerns a dinner party at the house of a psychiatrist, to which Thomas was invited by a mutual friend. When Thomas arrived, he told the host's wife that he wanted to wash up, and was shown upstairs. When he came back down, he had taken off his own clothes and was wearing his host's suit, tie, socks, and shoes. But what makes the story really astonishing is that no one said a word about it. As Hardwick observed, "Thomas was acknowledged, unconsciously perhaps, to be beyond judgment."

Most people, especially women, readily granted him this immunity; a few bystanders, almost all of them men, found it infuriating. One story Lycett does tell involves John Veale, a young composer, who lent Thomas some money for a taxi. Two weeks later, Veale made the mistake of asking for it back; Thomas gave him "a look as if I'd delivered an unforgivable insult." Veale's loss was only three shillings and sixpence—many agents, publishers, friends, and total strangers were stung for hundreds of pounds—but it showed him an important truth about Thomas: "Dylan was accustomed to being trailed around by people in whose eyes he could do no wrong. He was allowed to get away with anything." Under the circumstances, Thomas could hardly avoid becoming ruthless and even contemptuous in his exploitation, feeling that—as Lycett writes—"anyone who made a fuss of him was a fool and to be treated with disdain." As the historian A. J. P. Taylor—whose wife, Margaret, was Thomas's most generous sponsor—put it quite bluntly, "I disliked Dylan Thomas intensely. He was cruel."

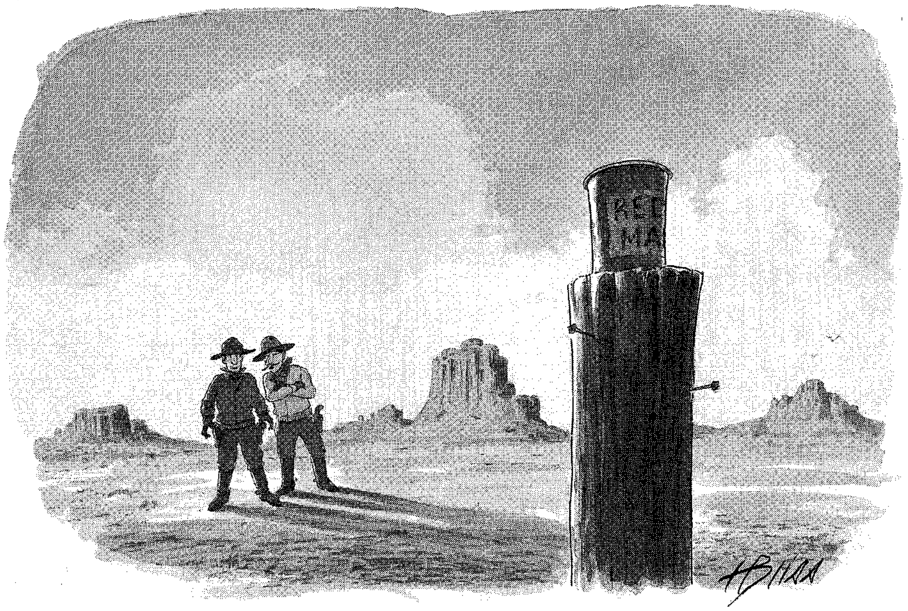
The virtue of Lycett's biography is that although he does not fall under Thomas's spell, he also resists such summary assessments. Paul Ferris, whose "Dylan Thomas: The Biography" was issued in a revised edition in 2000, remains Thomas's best and most comprehensive biographer; but half a lifetime spent with Thomas—he also edited the poet's letters, and wrote a life of Caitlin—clearly sapped his patience. (His index to the "Collected Letters" contains, under the heading "Finances," the entry: "needs money, *passim ad infinitum*.") Ferris takes an unmistakable satisfaction in exposing Thomas's lies and outrages; Lycett, a journalist and biographer whose past subjects include Muammar Qaddafi and Ian Fleming, simply shares with the reader his pleasure in the whole gossipy spectacle. When Lycett differs from Ferris about a particular episode, his interpretation is usually more charitable.

The affair of Vernon Watkins's wedding is a good example. In October, 1944, Thomas was to serve as best man at Watkins's wedding in London, but he did not appear. Lycett writes that Watkins "then received an envelope from Dylan containing two fawning letters, one apologising for having failed to post the other; and the other claiming that, in a confusion of missed trains, Dylan had forgotten the name of the church." This would be bad enough, but Ferris's version is worse. He reports the suspicion of Watkins's wife that the letter Thomas allegedly failed to post on the day of the wedding was a fake, deliberately creased and grimed to make it look as though he had accidentally been carrying it around in his pocket. In any case, the sequel was as usual: Watkins vowed, "That's the end of Dylan as far as I'm concerned," and then forgave him.

It was natural for people to indulge Thomas as though he were a child, since he was barely out of childhood when he became famous. By the age of nineteen, Thomas had already written many of his major poems: "And Death Shall Have No Dominion," "Before I Knocked," "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower." The world got a glimpse of what Thomas was up to in his "bedroom by the boiler" in March, 1934, when "Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines" was published in *The Listener*. Its completely assured voice drew the notice of T. S. Eliot and Stephen Spender, among others, and its suggestive imagery brought angry letters from subscribers:

> Dawn breaks behind the eyes;
> From poles of skull and toe the windy
> blood
> Slides like a sea;
> Nor fenced, nor staked, the gushers of
> the sky
> Spout to the rod
> Divining in a smile the oil of tears.

That December, when Thomas's "18 Poems" was published as the winner of a contest sponsored by the newspaper *Sunday Referee*, it created a minor sensation in literary London. The book was far from a commercial success—it took two years for the edition of five hundred copies to sell out—but it was widely reviewed, and gained Thomas some important champions. The critic Desmond Hawkins called it "the sort of bomb that bursts no more than once in three years"; the influential man of letters Cyril Connolly declared himself "completely ensnared."

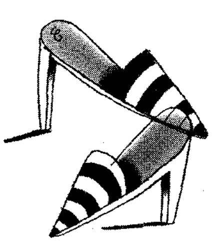


"O.K., if you make this one, that means he'll call, and if you miss—you call him."

A début like "18 Poems" would have attracted attention at any time, but in the mid-nineteen-thirties a poet of Thomas's particular gifts was especially welcome. Ever since W. H. Auden's "Poems" appeared, in 1930, British poetry had been dominated by his cool, intellectual, ominous music; along with such disciples as Spender and Cecil Day-Lewis, Auden created what sounded like the inevitable idiom for a decade of crisis. After five years of the "pylon poets," as they were sometimes called, Thomas's intoxicated lyricism was greeted like a rainstorm in a dry climate. Thomas could be as hermetic as any modernist, but his passionate incantations seemed to come out of an older Romantic tradition; it was not long before he was being hailed as a bard. Hawkins announced, "The Audenesque convention is nearly ended; and I credit Dylan Thomas with being the first considerable poet to break through fashionable limitation and speak an unborrowed language." The editor Geoffrey Grigson, whose early friendship with Thomas was ruined, predictably, over money matters, put it more snidely: Thomas was "a Young Poet untainted with Eliot or with Auden . . . whose poems, though a bit unintelligible, sounded at least familiar in an old grandiloquent way."

Thomas was alert to the danger of becoming merely a prodigy—like the surrealist poet David Gascoyne, who published his first book in 1932, at the age of sixteen—and insisted that his work be judged without reference to his age. But at the same time he played up his boyishness for comic or pathetic effect: at age twenty-three, he was still joking about his "particular baby bulbousness . . . like an Aryan Harpo bitten by wasps." In her memoir, Caitlin recalled that when they first met "Dylan may have been a skinny, springy lambkin, but I was more like its buxom mother then, and distinctly recollect carrying him across streams under one arm." And his early love letters try to enlist her in a conspiracy of Peter Pans: "You mustn't look too grown-up, because you'd look older than me; and you'll never, I'll never let you, grow wise, and I'll never, you shall never let me, grow wise, and we'll always be young and unwise together."

This hope—like Thomas's assurance, in a letter to his sister just before his marriage, that Caitlin cared "*absolutely* nothing for the responsibilities of husbandly provision"—was inevitably disappointed. For it was Caitlin who had to bear the full brunt of Thomas's womanizing, drunkenness, unemployment, and simple domestic helplessness. (On one occasion, Lycett writes, Caitlin asked her husband to make a cup of tea, and "he came back with a curious greasy concoction, explaining he could not find a top for the pot, so had covered it with half a pound of cheese.") Not unnaturally, she grew bitter, to the point of becoming, by most accounts, a monster. Lycett tells the story of how, when she suspected Thomas of flirting with a woman at a party, "she came up behind her supposed rival and, without saying a word, stubbed her cigarette down hard on the back of [her] hand. Then she said, 'Hullo' and walked calmly away to talk to someone else." Lycett acknowledges the extent of Caitlin's infidelities, but does not mention her nonchalant admission to Ferris, in the late nineteen-seventies, that "only a miracle had saved" her three children by Thomas "from being somebody else's."



The only person more revolted by his weakness than Caitlin was Thomas himself. Philip Larkin, the leading British poet of the generation after Thomas's, claimed to have read his published correspondence "with almost supernatural boredom, scrounging, apologising, promising, apologising again, fixing up appointments, apologising for not keeping them." But Thomas was well aware of the impression he made, writing to one editor that "nobody, one might think, *could* say that he was sincerely sorry so many times and still be sincere about it." Thomas, however, was sincere, every time; he just wasn't able to change, and his helplessness left him prey to a venomous self-loathing. "The selfish trouble," he explained to the poet and critic Henry Treece, "is that I myself have had to put up with these seriously annoying faults for so long that I've almost come to think other people can bear them. I am the one who wakes up nearest to myself, and the continual horror that comes from the realisation of this individuality has made me almost to believe that the reactions of others to my horrible self . . . are small enough, in comparison." Two years before his death, in a letter written to Princess Marguerite Caetani—the American-born editor of the international literary magazine *Botteghe Oscure*—he offered a more damning self-portrait than any enemy could: "I'm sick of my always hurdygurdying these little griefs out and me like a monkey on the top of it all with my beggar's cap."

The many people who tolerated and encouraged Thomas's vices used his genius as an excuse. More accurately, his vices were seen as an indispensable part of his genius; he fit the vulgar stereotype of the poet whose head was in the clouds, what he himself derided as the "Dreamy Poet Type B classified by *Punch*." And when Thomas's life of helplessness was consummated in a helpless death, brought on by weeks of hard drinking and a doctor's morphine injection, there was a widespread, if disguised, satisfaction at this perfection of the stereotype. Thomas's end could be appreciated on the terms Saul Bellow described in "Humboldt's Gift": "For some reason this awfulness is peculiarly appreciated by business and technological America. . . . The weakness of the spiritual powers is proved in the childishness, madness, drunkenness, and despair of these martyrs. . . . So poets are loved, but loved because they just can't make it here."

Indeed, Thomas's death was at least a dress rehearsal, and possibly a direct inspiration, for the fates of a generation of American poets. Delmore Schwartz, in the psychotic and alcoholic haze of his last years, began to haunt the White Horse Tavern, the famous site of Thomas's dissipations. Elizabeth Bishop, whose reticent, lucid poetry could not be more different from Thomas's, felt an "instantaneous sympathy" when they met in 1950, during her tenure as Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress. Writing to Pearl Kazin—whose affair with Thomas was by far the most serious of his American romances—just after his death, Bishop claimed her own kinship with Thomas: "In my own minor way I know enough about drink & destruction."

Most possessive of all was John

Berryman, who was a graduate student at Cambridge when he first met Thomas, in the late nineteen-thirties. Berryman—who was born just two days before Thomas—was staying at the Chelsea when Thomas had his final collapse there, and was the only person at his bedside when he stopped breathing. As Pearl Kazin recalled, she and Berryman both attended a conference at Bard College during Thomas's last, comatose weekend; on one country walk, Berryman "kept saying, as he took long gulps of air: 'I'm breathing for Dylan, if I breathe for him perhaps he will remain alive.' " Months before Berryman's suicide, in 1972, following his own battle with alcoholism, he wrote "In Memoriam (1914-53)," an elegy for Thomas:

> His talk, one told me, clung latterly to
> Eden,
> again & again of the Garden & the
> Garden's flowers,
> not ever the Creator, only of that creation
> with a radiant will to go there.

Although Thomas stood at the head of what Berryman called a "wrecked" generation of poets, he himself never blamed poetry for what befell him. The bitterest part of his shame was that, while he profited from the popular equation of poetry with weakness, he knew that it was in poetry alone that he was strong. "My selfish carelessness and unpunctuality," he wrote Treece, "I do not try to excuse as poet's properties. They are a bugbear & a humbug."

In fact, with a strange symmetry, Thomas's poetry takes the very things that cursed his life and turns them into blessings. In his verse, self-absorption becomes intense awareness; childishness becomes freshness of perception; and heedlessness becomes verbal daring. These are the virtues of youth, and it remains astonishing how very young Thomas was when he began to write his great poems; his precocity rivals that of Keats and Rimbaud.

Unlike Keats's, however, Thomas's poems reflect their creator's rawness. His thought is rudimentary—as Randall Jarrell noted in an early review, "the best and most brilliantly written pieces usually say less than the worst"—and much of his verbal tumult seems willfully obscure. Confronted with lines like "The atlas-eater with a jaw for news, / Bit out the mandrake with tomorrow's scream," many early readers grouped Thomas with the surrealists as a deliberate maker of nonsense. But Thomas passionately, and rightly, refused this label. "I agree," he wrote, "that much of the poetry is impossibly difficult; I've asked, or rather told, words to do too much; it isn't theories that choke some of the wilder and worser lines, but sheer greed." His difficulty is not the cool provocation of the avant-garde but the heat of the teenage poet writing for no ear save his own.

Isolation and appetite, in any teen-ager, naturally find release in self-gratification; in that sense, Thomas's poetry can fairly, and without insult, be called masturbatory. It is also frequently masturbatory in a more literal sense: he writes of being "tickled by the rub of love," "rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve," "the scalding veins that hold love's drop." The last line of "My Hero Bares His Nerves" quickly became notorious: "He pulls the chain, the cistern moves." Like Whitman, another great poet of onanism, Thomas sees his body from a certain remove, awed and even frightened by its capacity for sensation: "Ears in the turrets hear / Hands grumble on the door, / Eyes in the gables see / The fingers at the locks."

The same tendency, carried to its extreme, is what allows Thomas to see his entire existence as something that essentially does not belong to him. In his seething, pantheistic poems, his own life becomes just one moment of a universal process, a temporary habitation of the life force. At times, this can sound like narcissism—"My holy lucky body," Thomas writes in one poem—but in a deeper sense it is a shocking denial of the self. "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower / Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees / Is my destroyer": death is the implicit, inescapable end of growth. At his best, Thomas has a nearly metaphysical ability to make us see all the moments of a life, from birth to death, in a single instant: "*The oak is felled in the acorn / And the hawk in the egg kills the wren.*" And when the Second World War came it was this power simultaneously to see death and to see through death that produced his great war poems: "Ceremony After a Fire Raid," "Among Those Killed in the Dawn Raid Was a Man Aged a Hundred," and—the most significant title of all—"A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London."

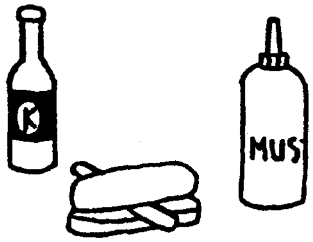
But that poem, which beautifully imagines the child's death as a homecoming to Nature—"Robed in the long friends, / The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother"—also reveals the limitations of Thomas's vision. It is not, finally, a truly consoling poem; in his haste to adopt a cosmic view of the tragedy, Thomas seems indifferent to its human meaning. The refusal to mourn is a refusal to love the dead child as an individual, the way those who knew her might have; it turns her immediately into a symbol. "After the first death, there is no other," Thomas writes in one of his many unforgettable lines. But first there is the first death, in all its irredeemable particularity; and Thomas's language, with its totem words and sorcerer's rhythms, is not scaled to the particular. His poetry, as Elizabeth Bishop noted, has a "desperate win-or-lose-all quality," which "eliminates everything from life except something almost beyond human supportability after a while."

This insupportable intensity was, perhaps, the price of Thomas's adolescent genius. In some ways, Thomas resembles Wordsworth, whose lament for lost childhood, the "Immortality Ode," haunts several of Thomas's later poems. What makes Wordsworth the larger poet is the experience he captured in a line from "Elegiac Stanzas": "a deep distress hath humanised my Soul." Thomas's sorrows, terrible though they became, never had that effect; instead of broadening and renewing his gift, they eroded its early momentum. At the age of twenty-six, Lycett points out, "Dylan had already written more than eighty percent of his published verse." In the last eight years of his life, he wrote only six poems. And the self-inflicted decay of his final years, though accelerated by his American tours, was surely rooted in this loss of inspiration. Being treated as a poet, with all the indulgence and condescension that entailed, was always bad for Dylan Thomas. Writing poems was what allowed him to survive it, as he gratefully acknowledged: "To take to give is all, return what is hungrily given / Puffing the pounds of manna up through the dew to heaven." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Bling, *by Erica Kennedy (Miramax; $24.95).* In this gleeful satire of the hip-hop glitterati, a girl from the sticks comes to New York to make it big and risks losing her soul along the way, literally—she's a wanna-be soul singer who gets forcibly made over into a ghetto-fab princess, complete with diamond monograms on her jeans, fake breasts, and a Brazilian bikini wax. When she is taken under the wing of a publicity-addicted aging (thirty-one, that is) supermodel and a dipsomaniac socialite from a Park Avenue family, the old Pygmalion plot swings into action. Kennedy takes us briskly through this oversized, exuberant world, dispatching her heroine into the arms of a mogul boss in a series of wickedly maladroit sex scenes. The minor characters here are half the fun, like the ex-con "thug genius" whose latest hit has a chorus composed entirely of gunfire.

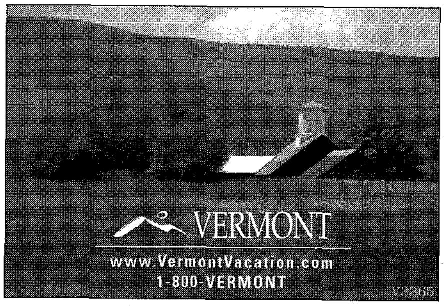
Wake Up, Sir!, *by Jonathan Ames (Scribner; $23).* Alan Blair is a ne'er-do-well New Jerseyite who has failed to follow his first novel, "I Pity I," published seven years ago, with a second. At thirty, he's alcoholic, afraid of confronting the bellicose uncle with whom he lives, and would be penniless but for an accident settlement. His most treasured possessions are a collection of dubious sports coats and a valet, who just happens to be named Jeeves. As you'd expect, Jeeves is circumspect, judicious, and ready at hand; what he may not be is real. Ames's inventive romp follows its hero into very un-Wodehousian territory—an artists' colony in upstate New York (based, in withering detail, on Yaddo), where the action revolves around art, sex, and larceny. But Jeeves remains faithful throughout; no amount of bad behavior can wring from him a sterner rejoinder than "Very strange, sir."



What's the Matter with Kansas?, *by Thomas Frank (Metropolitan; $24).* Kansas, once home to farmers who marched against "money power," is now solidly Republican. In Frank's scathing and high-spirited polemic, this fact is not just "the mystery of Kansas" but "the mystery of America." Dismissing much of the received punditry about the red-blue divide, Frank argues that the problem is the "systematic erasure of the economic" from discussions of class and its replacement with a notion of "authenticity," whereby "there is no bad economic turn a conservative cannot do unto his buddy in the working class, as long as cultural solidarity has been cemented over a beer." The leaders of this backlash, by focussing on cultural issues in which victory is probably impossible (abortion, "filth" on TV), feed their base's sense of grievance, abetted, Frank believes, by a "criminally stupid" Democratic strategy of triangulation. Liberals do not need to know more about NASCAR; they need to talk more about money and class.

Waiting for the End of the World, *by Richard Ross (Princeton Architectural Press; $19.95).* In St. Petersburg, the Trendy Griboyedov Club, a brightly painted subterranean night spot, occupies the site of a Cold War-era bomb shelter. Elsewhere, thousands of similar shelters sit empty and decaying or have been converted to mundane uses such as data storage, now that nuclear fear has been supplanted by more amorphous threats. Ross's photographs of shelters around the world are colorful and melancholy, suffused with a creepy Egglestonian light. "Shelters are the architecture of failure," he says. "The failure of moderation, politics, communication, diplomacy, and sustaining humanity." Most amazing is the scale of such hidden places as Beijing's Underground City, built to hold three hundred and fifty thousand people, or the bunker beneath the Greenbrier hotel, in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, designed to serve as the emergency shelter for the entire U.S. Congress.

THE BOLD NEW MAGAZINE
at the intersection of law and life
In the July | August Issue:
Paying an ex-cop to abduct your kid
Colorado's river courts • The last Nazis
Legal isolationism • Stopping spam
legal**affairs**
On Newsstands Now
www.legalaffairs.org • 800-406-5615
• SPECIAL OFFER •
Save 44% at www.legalaffairs.org/nyer


VERMONT
www.VermontVacation.com
1-800-VERMONT
V3365

JOHN ⚓ CHRISTIAN
DESIGNERS & CRAFTSMEN
YOUR *Anniversary Date*
IN ROMAN NUMERALS!
(GOLD AND PLATINUM)
December 11, 1998
XII XI MCMXCVIII
14K GOLD $490
3 DAY RUSH AVAILABLE
Free Catalogue
www.ringbox.com
1-888-646-6466

MEN'S WIDE SHOES
EEE-EEEEEE, SIZES 5-13
High quality • 1-800-992-WIDE
200 styles • FREE catalog
HITCHCOCK SHOES, INC.
Dept. 69G Hingham, MA 02043 www.wideshoes.com

Laughing Buddha
- a novel -
HAIKUGUY.COM

Explore New England Islands
FREE SHORE TOURS
Charming, casual, yacht-style cruise
Nantucket, Cuttyhunk, Newport,
Martha's Vineyard & Block Island
5 Nights from $1195 August 8, 15, 29
▸Only 100 guests ▸Depart RI ▸As seen on PBS
AMERICAN CANADIAN CARIBBEAN LINE
800-556-7450 www.accl-smallships.com

BOOKS

WIDE TURNS

In a new novel, Jerry Stahl channels Fatty Arbuckle.

BY THOMAS MALLON

It says something that the most wholesome-feeling work in Jerry Stahl's four-book œuvre should be his new novel about Fatty Arbuckle, the silent-film comedian ruined by the popular belief that sometime over Labor Day weekend, 1921, with the help of a Coke bottle, he raped and murdered a young actress named Virginia Rappe. Stahl's first work of fiction, "Perv" (1999), was a coming-of-age story that ended with several dozen pages devoted to a staggering sexual assault against two teenagers inside a car. "Plainclothes Naked" (2001), a detective novel, rhapsodizes over a heroine who puts Drano and a crushed light bulb in her husband's cereal. And Stahl's memoir, "Permanent Midnight" (1995), recalls how his jobs writing for TV shows like "ALF" paid for the heroin he injected in the office bathroom or at his worktable at home, where he once tied off with the electrical cord of his Smith-Corona.

According to the Introduction of "I, Fatty" (Bloomsbury; $23.95), the Los Angeles police arrested Stahl, sometime in the nineteen-eighties, in front of what had once been Fatty Arbuckle's house. But readers of the author's previous work will know that there's more than this slight geographical coincidence behind Stahl's latest choice of subject matter. He and the Kansas-born hero are bound, at about eight decades' remove, by show business, drugs, father-fixation, and king-size self-loathing—the last being, always, Stahl's richest terrain.

"He hated me on sight," says Stahl's first-person Fatty, a baby born so big, in 1887, that his father blamed him for his mother's ensuing poor health. In a showstopper of foreshadowing, Stahl has William Arbuckle lambaste his portly offspring: "*You broke Mama's little flower squeezing your sideshow keister out of her.*" Fatty Arbuckle's biographers don't record this particular turn of phrase, but Stahl does a fine, nasty job of making the father's blows and insults the basis of a decidedly Freudian Fatty: "It was like some unwritten rule inside my head. *You have to hurt yourself for other people.*"

Skipping school to watch the itinerant plate spinners and dialect comedians of vaudeville, Stahl's Fatty soon lumbers onstage himself, wolfing down the applause and getting some of his biggest laughs by the way he dodges the hook. By now a nearly happy "homeless prepube the size of a polar bear," he swaddles his girth in baby clothes and drag in order to launch a career that eventually brings star stage billing and then Hollywood. Fatty's initial contempt for the town ("Moving pictures, as far as I could tell, were made by hacks and peddled to idiots") more or less matches Stahl's latter-day assessment in "Permanent Midnight" ("The only way the Fox lot could pass as a 'Dream Factory' is if your dreams happened to be stocked with Xerox machines"). But Stahl needs Fatty's fall to come with a thud, so he makes the sensible effort to create an at least semi-golden age of Hollywood high jinks through which his ur-Belushi can first disport himself. The reader gets hit with some familiar but surefire stuff about Mack Sennett ("His belches could singe your eyebrows, and he liked to aim them") as well as Sennett's girlfriend, Mabel Normand (who "sniffed so much cocaine, she was the only starlet who couldn't smell him").

The silent-film star speaks his piece.

ISTVAN BANYAI

Sennett's Keystone studio, whose slapstick fare forced it to spend "more on bandages than on makeup," proves to be the real making of Fatty. The director's belief in mayhem and desperation had possibilities for both Arbuckle and Charlie Chaplin, another Keystone recruit, though Fatty here points out "the big diff—highbrows loved Charlie. I, on the other hand, was lowbrow as a beer hall crapper." By 1916, Adolph Zukor was luring Fatty—advertised as the epitome of family entertainment—into two-reelers and then features for Paramount.

Stahl gives the fictional Fatty a chance to speak his piece about the catastrophic party he threw on the twelfth floor of San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel. Virginia Rappe may have had her face on the sheet music for "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," but Stahl's Fatty will have the reader know that at Keystone "she'd given half the boys gonorrhea and the other half lice," and that she habitually drank cocktails in "double figures" before tearing off her clothes and shouting accusations at any and all nearby males. After she passed out in Fatty's suite, all Fatty did, he swears, was practice a chilled-bottle version of the revival-by-ice technique he'd once learned from Buster Keaton. And, by the way, it was a bottle of champagne, not Coke.

A botched abortion, performed before or after the St. Francis party, is more likely than Fatty to have contributed to Rappe's death from peritonitis. But only after three trials did Fatty secure an acquittal, and it is difficult to overestimate the intensity of public attention to the case. President Harding followed it on the radio, a detail that Stahl doesn't use, though he does work in the fact that Denmark's League of Nations delegate blamed the Arbuckle-Rappe incident for an upsurge in white-slave traffic.

Stahl makes a big change to Fatty's actual fadeout, which came in 1933, after a decade of working his way back up through vaudeville and shorts to a new, never fulfilled feature deal. Death was probably the result of a heart attack, but the novelist kills Fatty, with pardonable artistic license, by means of a heroin overdose. There is ample evidence that the comic was addicted to drink and heroin at various times in his life, notably after the surgical removal of a carbuncle, and, besides, shooting smack is what Stahl has always done best, at least on paper. He is a better-than-Burroughs virtuoso when it comes to depicting every paranoid high and cold-kicking torment obtainable from the street and the medicine chest. When Fatty attempts withdrawal, he feels "an enormous, buzzing silence, as though a phone had been left off the hook inside my skull."

Only self-disgust—which fills "Permanent Midnight" and the autobiographical "Perv" and even stretches of the high-spirited "Plainclothes Naked"—inspires Stahl to the same level of lyricism as drugs do. His Fatty judges himself to be nothing more than a "gin-soaked marshmallow" whose sexual performance improves only when he's been humiliated in hundred-point headlines. Still, there's an important difference between his self-flagellation and Stahl's. The author maintains a measure of hip, detached goofing when his own worthlessness is at issue (in "Permanent Midnight," he wonders "if there's any more corrupt sensation on the planet than attending Lamaze class high on heroin"), whereas Fatty tends to go in for Jerry Lewis-like lachrymosity: "a Little Tramp stops being a tramp when the camera stops rolling. But a Fatty stays fat."

The appeal of first-person narrative to any writer of historical fiction is obvious enough: the intimacy and immediacy of the speaking subject seems like a way to jump the temporal chasm. And yet, just as a lawyer knows to keep certain defendants off the stand, there are reasons for novelists to avoid allowing certain protagonists to testify on their own behalf. Fatty is probably one of these characters. Stahl gives him a lot of believable mother wit and moxie, but the reader has trouble hearing the comedian speak, with his second-grade education, "in fuzzy retrospect" or talk about a "highly irritating endeavor." Nor is it any more plausible when Stahl puts his own rough, raunchy voice in Fatty's larynx. Indeed, one odd problem for this novel is the way Fatty's torments and squalor can never quite approach what Stahl's regular readers know about the author's. "I, Fatty" sometimes feels a bit stately, a methadone version of Stahl's other work.

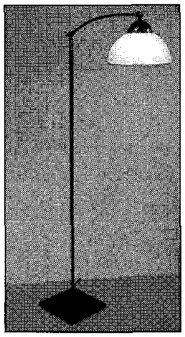
All of which is to say that "I, Fatty" is not exactly "I, Claudius." It's not even "I, the Jury." But Stahl remains a writer who delivers, every few pages, a bit more than a reader expects. He shouldn't, of course, be writing books at all: anyone who has read "Permanent Midnight" knows that he should be dead, or, at best, rehabbed back into television. But Stahl has earned the blurbs he's picked up along the way from James Ellroy, Hubert Selby, Jr., and Jim Carroll, and has the right to be counted in their skanky, stylish company. When, in "Plainclothes Naked," Stahl has a character get "post-coital without getting coital," he accomplishes, in a phrase, what literary fiction usually takes two pages of workshop-modulated narrative to get through.

"Life is bound to do something to your view of human nature," his Fatty says. This is a pretty good wisecrack—the essential rhetorical mode of the nineteen-twenties, when the epigram began to chew gum. But it's also a bona-fide novelist's understanding of the interplay between character and action. "Making carnival" is a phrase that recurs in Stahl's books; his peculiar burden is forever having to find his way toward even madder music than was playing on the St. Francis's twelfth floor. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Cambridge (Mass.) TAB.

A 14-year-old Cambridge boy was arrested after he allegedly threw a sneaker at his mother. He was charged with domestic assault and battery and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (sneaker).



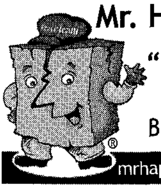
PERFECT READING LAMP
LEDGER Floor Lamp
The Double Swivel Action places light correctly for a high or low chair, desk or a computer.
Bronze with Slate Base
Opal White Shade
Height (Adj): 30"-54"
100 w bulb
Dimmer Switch
$129.00
2 for $229.00
shipping $12.00 each
Mail or Phone Orders
NEW HAVEN LIGHTING 1-800-243-3123
P.O BOX 6353 Hamden, CT 06517
www.newhavenlighting.com

MAD RIVER VALLEY
VERMONT
The Vermont you imagine...mountain peaks and valley farms, steepled villages and country inns, fine dining and fine arts, hiking and biking trails, farmers' markets and no traffic lights.
Vermont Festival of the Arts, July 29–August 22
Mad River Valley
VERMONT
Discover Our Good Nature.
1-800-82-VISIT
madrivervalley.com

If you smoked pot at Monterey in '67, you might have CVD.
boomercoalition.org

SMART IS SEXY
Date fellow graduates and faculty of The Ivies, Seven Sisters, MIT, Stanford, UC Berkeley, medical schools and a few others.
THE RIGHT STUFF
More than 3,800 members
800-988-5288
www.rightstuffdating.com

hand woven collars
www.tailwags.com
a tail we could wag 866.726.WAGS



Mr. Happy Crack says...
"A Dry Crack Is A Happy Crack!"
Boxers • T-Shirts • Hats
mrhappycrack.com 866-HAPPY CRACK

DANCING

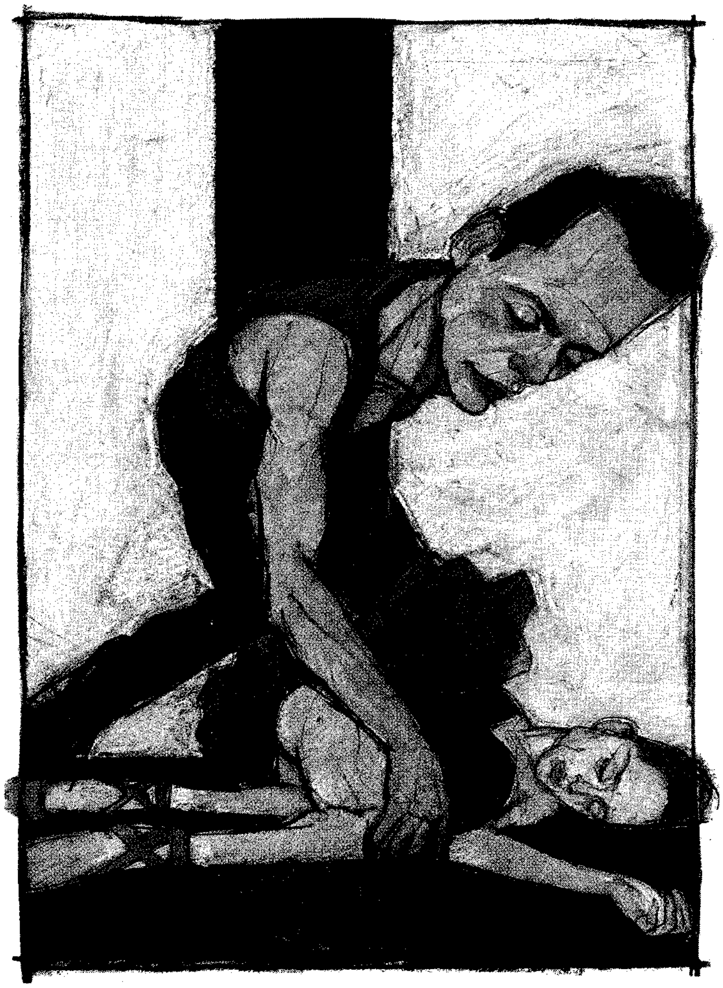
TRIBUTE

The Balanchine centennial.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

This year is the centenary of George Balanchine's birth, and, in recognition, his company, New York City Ballet, staged a two-season festival, "Balanchine 100: The Centennial Celebration," which ran from November through last week. In fact, these two seasons were basically just regular N.Y.C.B. seasons, repackaged as a tribute. The winter season, called "Heritage," had to do with Balanchine's Russian and European roots, so that's when the company danced the older ballets, his own and those he learned from. The spring season, entitled "Vision," was a tribute to what he created for City Ballet, thus making room for later ballets, his own and those he influenced.

In honor of Balanchine's musical choices, the spring season was subdivided into an American Music Festival, a Russian Music Festival, and a European Music Festival, the last of which was then broken down into a German night, an Austrian night, and French, Italian, and British nights, with appropriate cultural legates giving us curtain speeches about Balanchine's greatness. On Balanchine's birthday, January 22nd, there was an onstage party, with a cake and balloons. There was also an alumni night, with veteran N.Y.C.B. dancers rising in the audience to be applauded. The spring gala included guests from all of Lincoln Center's theatres. Plácido Domingo sang; Wynton Marsalis blew his horn. The gala's m.c. was Sarah Jessica Parker, who, though she has no connection with Lincoln Center or Balanchine, is a big star.



Jock Soto and Miranda Weese in Christopher Wheeldon's "Shambards."

N. ASCENCIOS

But, once the smoke cleared from the altars, it was obvious that the one tribute City Ballet owes Balanchine, that of dancing his ballets competently, is not being paid. What was true at the company's previous Balanchine festival, in 1993 (the tenth anniversary of his death), is no less true today. The company can still perform well, at times brilliantly, in Balanchine's story ballets and character ballets, pieces where the dancers have a drama or at least a theme to latch onto. What they cannot manage is his pure-dance ballets—that is, the ballets that were the focus of his career and his chief contribution to twentieth-century art. Balanchine was a Platonist. Of his "Liebeslieder Walzer," where the four couples dance first in a drawing room, then in a garden, he said that the first part took place in the world, the second part in the soul. That could be said of others of his ballets, too, but often he just went straight to the soul—the abstract. His "Theme and Variations," it has been said, is a distillation of "The Sleeping Beauty"; his "Diamonds" a précis of "Swan Lake." In those ballets, there are traces of the narrative source. Elsewhere, there are no hints. Looking at "Concerto Barocco" or "Le Tombeau de Couperin," you just knew what they were about—mostly, the ennoblement of feeling by form. The bodies were the feeling; the music was the form. Out came the dancing, the soul and the world in one.

Or that's what you used to see. Today, in large measure, it is gone. For years in the eighties and nineties, Peter Martins cast Heather Watts, his former girlfriend, as the lead woman in "Concerto Barocco" and "Apollo," that other great distillation. She wiped them clean of meaning. Today, he has another dancer, Yvonne Borree, doing that duty. In the winter season, Borree led most of the "Apollo"s and "Barocco"s, and these two ballets, arguably Balanchine's greatest, emerged looking utterly hollow. The N.Y.C.B. audience, or its newer members, must have said to themselves, "Why all the fuss about Balanchine?" Is that the message that the company, tributes notwithstanding, is trying to put out? I noticed that at the spring gala, which was being televised—that is, saved for all time—Borree suddenly came to life, and put in a fiery performance. So did Maria Kowroski, a dancer of huge potential who in the winter season had cast the don't-look-for-anything-here spell on "Diamonds." What are these people thinking when the TV cameras haven't awakened their pride? "Don't try so hard"? That's what it looks like.

Some critics have said that Martins's failure is in the development of the dancers' personalities. This is certainly a problem at City Ballet. You don't see a lot of souls on that stage, and when you do they tend to belong to the older dancers, such as Peter Boal and Kyra Nichols. But I think that this problem should not be separated from the company's technical problems. Most ballet dancers don't go to college. Ballet class is their college, the place where, as in Art 101, they learn about achievement and difficulty, humility and struggle—matters of the soul. Since Peter Martins took over, in 1983, the company's technical level has steadily declined. Balanchine's ballets are now too hard for them. Other writers have said this, and Martins has steadfastly denied it. "The steps are there," he recently told the Washington *Post*. If so, what happened to the double air turn-arabesques to four points—north, south, east, west—when Nilas Martins did "Scotch Symphony" in January? Where were the back-travelling sautés développés in Joaquin de Luz's rendering of Oberon's big solo in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"? When Robert Tewsley, in a performance of "Theme and Variations," was faced with having to do the famous double air turn-pirouette combination, he just about gave up in the middle. To fumble these steps is like cracking on high C.

When Balanchine died, he left Peter Martins a double legacy: first, a peerless repertory—no other company in the world can match it—and, second, a shoes-to-fill problem on the order of the Kennedy-Johnson succession. To maintain those ballets, so demanding of body and mind, would require a commitment, an idealism, comparable to Balanchine's. But, from the very beginning, Martins, in his choreography, showed a temperament quite different from Balanchine's: dry, iconoclastic. Soon after he took over, the Balanchine ballets started to blur. Critics complained. Martins went on the defensive, and much of his stewardship of the company since then can be seen as a digging in of the heels.

That includes the centennial celebration. Look at the ballets that Martins commissioned for this tribute to his predecessor. One, "Double Feature," by the musical-comedy director/choreographer Susan Stroman, was good, or the first part of it was: a Cinderella story based on silent-movie tearjerkers, set to an orchestration of Irving Berlin songs, and demonstrating all of Stroman's happy mastery of old theatrical conventions. The cast glowed, and Ashley Bouder, as the Cinderella figure, showed that there actually are some young dancers at N.Y.C.B. who can get their legs up. The piece was a curious contribution to a ballet festival, since Stroman seems to know only about six or seven ballet steps, but Martins bluntly told the *Times* that he commissioned "Double Feature" so that he could sell some tickets—Stroman is the hottest director on Broadway—and at least it gave the audience some fun.

Which one would have looked for in vain among the new ballets of the spring season. Here we got two ballets from Martins himself. One, "Chichester Psalms," to Leonard Bernstein's cantata, was a soupy antiwar number. The other, "Eros Piano," to a score by John Adams, was the more typical Martins product: deadpan. In much of his work, Martins avoids having a central pas de deux (the core of meaning in most ballets) by converting his twosome into a threesome. And, whatever the arrangement, he tends to disable the woman by overpartnering. She barely gets to move on her own. Here we saw all that again. Alexandra Ansanelli and Ashley Laracey were laid across Nikolaj Hübbe's lap, hauled to his shoulder, smeared across his body. In between, they took a rest in the wings or, at one point, lay face down on the linoleum awaiting their next turn. Female ballet dancing was the center of Balanchine's work. For a long time now, it has been strange to see Martins's prostrate women on City Ballet's stage, but it has never looked weirder than at a Balanchine festival.

The spring season also included a big ballet, "Shambards," by Christopher Wheeldon, to a score by the prominent Scottish composer James MacMillan. Since 2001, Wheeldon has been N.Y.C.B.'s resident choreographer—a hire that won Martins a lot of praise, for Wheeldon is very gifted. Nevertheless, he, too, goes in for overpartnering, and in the duets he created for Miranda

JOIN THE NEW YORKER
MARKETING DEPARTMENT'S
ONLINE FORUM

THE NEW YORKER
COMPASS

• • •

www.newyorkercompass.com

Satisfaction

We got a great quality bed,
they delivered it really fast and we love it!

At 1-800-Mattress® your satisfaction is guaranteed. That's why one third of our customers have shopped with us before, and now refer their family and friends.

We sell only the best brands with styles to fit every budget. Add great selection with low prices and there's no reason to shop anywhere else.

Call today and save $25-$150 on your purchase.

1·800·Mattress. mattress.com
Call for a showroom near you 1-800-736-8464

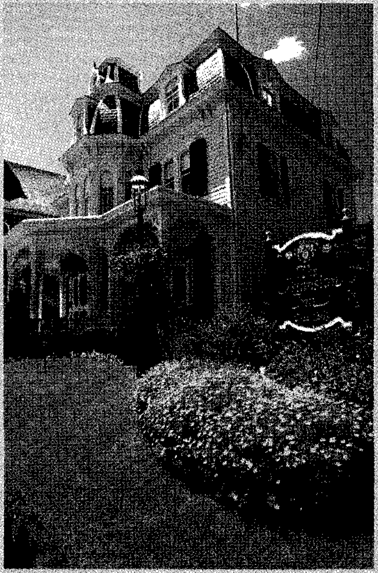
10 Million Pieces!
China, Crystal, Silver, Collectibles
183,000 Patterns • Old/New • Buy/Sell
REPLACEMENTS, LTD.®
1-800-REPLACE (1-800-737-5223)
PO Box 26029, Greensboro, NC 27420 • Dept YO
www.replacements.com®

Private Villa Vacations
St. Barts, the Caribbean, France, Italy & Greece
1.800.843.5893
www.wimco.com
Representing SIBARTH Real Estate in St. Barts

advertisement

ON THE TOWN

Be the first to hear about events, promotions, and special offers from New Yorker advertisers.



From quaint small-town bed and breakfasts to ultra-hip four-star restaurants. From the groundbreaking National Constitution Center to Valley Forge. From the charming shops of New Hope to the manicured beauty of Longwood Gardens. You'll find it all along Pennsylvania's Road to Revolution. It's just one of the many exciting road trips you can enjoy in Pennsylvania. Go to visitPA.com or call 1-800-VISIT-PA to learn more about our three-, four-, and seven-day road trips.

> ready > set > go

pennsylvania
STATE OF INDEPENDENCE
PA

For more information, log on to www.newyorker.com and click on The New Yorker ReaderLink.

Weese and Jock Soto in "Shambards" he outdid himself in this regard, carrying the pushing and pulling to the point where Weese's character actually died. You couldn't believe it, but there she was, inert on the floor, with her tutu in her face. Soto then grabbed one of her arms and dragged her away. (Martins also once made a ballet, the 1988 "Tanzspiel," in which the woman was ostensibly killed in the course of the pas de deux.) With overpartnering, one hesitates to assign political meaning. Maybe these choreographers don't really mean to insult women. But, once the woman is dead, it's hard not to see her as ill-used. In "Shambards," the murder had a thematic context. MacMillan's score was inspired by an angry poem that Edwin Muir wrote about Scottish culture, and the music, too, is angry about Scotland: Highland tunes keep cropping up, only to be curdled in dissonance. O.K., but all of that is subtext. What you saw on the stage—again, in the course of a festival dedicated to Balanchine, Mr. Ballet-Is-Woman—was a woman being mauled to death.

The final insult was saved for the end of the season: Boris Eifman's "Musagète," a dance essay on Balanchine's life, set mainly to selections from Bach and Tchaikovsky. To New Yorkers, Eifman is the best known of the post-glasnost Russian choreographers—indeed, the only one they know. Since 1998, he has been showing his lurid, sentimental work in regular seasons at City Center. "Musagète," which takes its name from the original title of Balanchine's "Apollo" ("Apollon Musagète," or "Apollo, Leader of the Muses"), is directly in line with what he has shown us before. Balanchine, we are to understand, was a tortured artist. He had passionate loves—enter the "muses"—but they all went wrong, and one went very wrong. At this point, we see Tanaquil LeClercq, Balanchine's last wife, being stricken with polio, as she was in real life, at the age of twenty-seven. Alexandra Ansanelli, playing LeClercq to Robert Tewsley's Balanchine, cramps up grotesquely; her feet hang like blobs. Eventually, she is dragged offstage, presumably dead, like Weese in "Shambards." Actually, LeClercq lived, partially paralyzed, to the age of seventy-one. She died in 2000 and therefore, mercifully, will not see Eifman's ballet. But forget the bad-taste problem. What about the snap of the fingers with which our hero turns life's tragedies into art's sublimities? And what about the silly, leg-flinging dances that are offered as those sublimities? Susan Stroman at least doesn't pretend to be a ballet choreographer. Eifman does. I don't blame him, though. He is just an ordinary schlockmeister. I blame Martins. This ballet is a direct slap in Balanchine's face.

For the most part, Balanchine's kind of dancing—that speedy, objective, fire-and-ice movement theatre—is now gone from New York. Last month, American Ballet Theatre, the company that dances across the plaza from N.Y.C.B. and is always contrasted with it (corny A.B.T. versus cool N.Y.C.B.), put on its own Balanchine celebration. It wasn't two seasons; it was just one program—"Theme and Variations," "Mozartiana," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Ballet Imperial"—and it was a thrill. Veronika Part and Nina Ananiashvili overplayed the sorrows of "Mozartiana," but both of them, and especially Ananiashvili, treated the ballet as a gift, something, they seemed to say, that they had waited their whole lives for. Herman Cornejo, in "Mozartiana" 's gigue, got the tone a little wrong, thought the role was a character, but, oh, the wit and elegance—the sheer, dancing joy—that that thought inspired in him. These people can't help being narrative. Like most of A.B.T.'s principal dancers, they are Russian or Latin, and that's how Russian and Latin teachers tell their students to dance. They also tell them to be frontal, self-presentational—to act like stars—which is a way of performing that Balanchine did everything to discourage in his own company, but which flourishes at A.B.T. So the members of A.B.T. didn't dance Balanchine exactly the way Balanchine wanted. They just danced it beautifully, with conviction and pride. To them, his work was a show, and so they made it one.

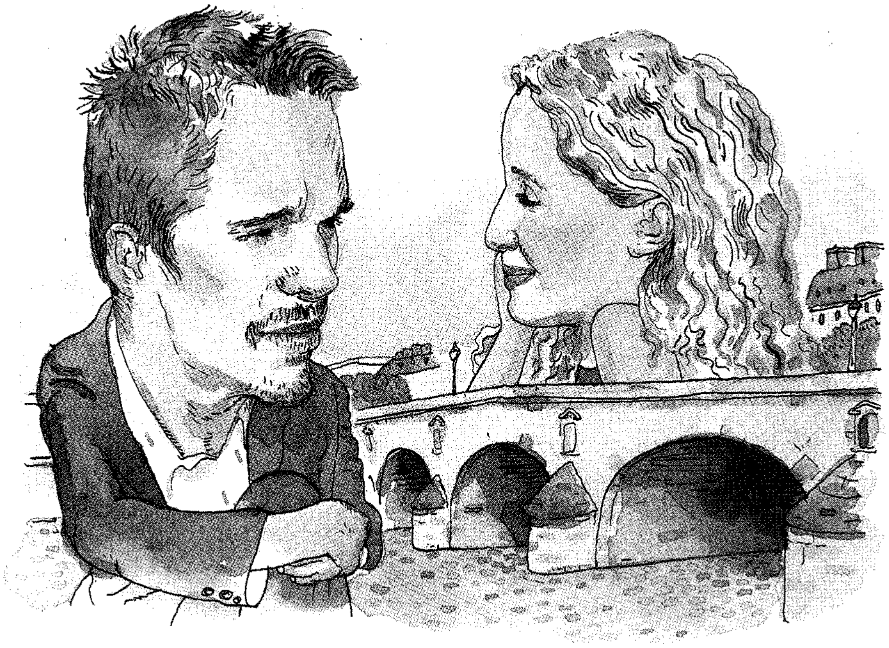
As for the City Ballet dancers, they—or their rehearsal directors—don't seem to think Balanchine is a show. On the evidence of the performances, they think he's a millstone around their necks, a standard they're always being asked to come up to, without ever being told how. And that's because their boss can't tell them. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

WANDERERS

"Before Sunset" and "The Terminal."

BY DAVID DENBY



Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy meet again in Richard Linklater's new movie.

BARRY BLITT

In "Before Sunrise," the charmingly diminutive movie that Richard Linklater made in 1995, Jesse (Ethan Hawke), a footloose young American travelling through Europe, meets a student from Paris, Celine (Julie Delpy), on a train, and persuades her to stop off with him in Vienna. They spend the night walking around the city and making love. As they part in the morning, they know that their night together had an element of the improbable about it—they almost see themselves as characters in a story—and they decide to keep the fable going. Instead of exchanging telephone numbers, they agree to meet in Vienna exactly six months later. Linklater's new movie, "Before Sunset," brings these two risk-takers back together. Nine years have gone by. It turns out that one showed up for the date and the other did not, but they're both angry (though for different reasons). Jesse is now a nervously self-conscious novelist, whose first book—it is, of course, a fictional account of his night with Celine—has just been published in France. At an interview session at the Shakespeare & Co. bookstore, near Notre-Dame, he notices his old friend standing in a corner. Celine has become an earnest public-health activist, who often travels to India and other countries but still lives in Paris. After exchanging skittish hellos, they decide to kill some time together before Jesse has to head for the airport to go home. Like the earlier movie, "Before Sunset" turns into an orgy of talk—flirtatious, soulful, boastful, self-deprecating talk, some of it borderline pretentious but all of it utterly convincing as the kind of intelligent and foolish things said by people who connect with each other through their tastes and their passions. "Sunrise" was fresh and easy and ardent. This movie is enchanting, too, but it goes deeper; it's more direct, with intimations of sharp disappointment and unhappiness. Linklater wrote "Sunset" with help from the two stars, and one of the insights developed in the script is that most of us only get hungrier as we get older—more eager for experience, for emotional danger. Jesse and Celine are still a romantic possibility.

People who long to hear good conver-

New and Improved Aeron®
We Will Not Be Undersold!
•All sizes and colors in stock
•1-year money back guarantee
•12-year warranty
Prices starting at just
$649
Featuring the New PostureFit™ Option
Full-featured Aerons® starting at
$849
1-877-628-LESS
www.ny.sit4less.com

TheaterMania.com
Up-to-date reviews, news, and tickets
Broadway • Off Broadway • Nationwide
Over 300,000 members enjoy our theater discounts and special offers.
JOIN FOR FREE AND YOU MAY WIN TICKETS TO A HIT SHOW!
visit www.TheaterMania.com

What if...?
Storybase™
Software for Writers
THE Plotting and Scene-Building Tool
www.storybase.net

Sept. 10–13 • NYC • Omega & V-Day present
WOMEN & POWER CONFERENCE
Eve Ensler, Jane Fonda, Gloria Steinem, Susan Sarandon (pending), Azar Nafisi, Debra Winger, Pat Mitchell, Sarah Jones, Carole Black, Marie Wilson, and others
eomega.org • 800.944.1001

Camden's Authentic Summer Hotel Since 1901
WHITEHALL INN
Experience Maine's finest seacoast village in the tradition of style and grace. 50 rooms, fine dining, wine & spirits.
1-800-789-6565
Box 558, Camden, ME 04843
www.whitehall-inn.com

SWIM BETTER NOW
We Guarantee It!
View Free Video at www.totalimmersion.net
Or call 800-609-7946 for free brochure
Total Immersion SWIMMING™

ADVERTISEMENT

THE NEW YORKER
PRESENTS
FICTION
LIVE

ACTORS FROM THE STAGE
AND SCREEN
READ STORIES FROM
THE NEW YORKER

THE STEPHEN TALKHOUSE
161 Main Street
Amagansett, New York

Saturday, July 31st, at 7 P.M.
(Doors open at 6 P.M.)

Tickets go on sale July 10th
Tickets available through Ticketweb.com - $20

www.ticketweb.com
TICKETWEB
866.468.7619

Net proceeds from The New Yorker's Fiction Live will go to Soldierride and The Wounded Warrior Project, a program administered by the United Spinal Association, a nonprofit organization that was founded to give assistance to soldiers who have been severely wounded in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

SPONSORED BY

FLA USA VISIT FLORIDA
Polaroid
GREY GOOSE VODKA
MIRASSOU WINERY

sation in American movies often wonder, Where are the equivalents to an Eric Rohmer movie like “Claire’s Knee”? Well, Linklater, the movie kingpin of Austin, Texas, who earlier made the cult classics “Slacker” and “Dazed and Confused” and, more recently, the commercial hit “School of Rock,” has now created two such films. This one is both more spontaneous than Rohmer’s work and more daring in its technique. “Before Sunrise” was a night film; Jesse and Celine sampled the miscellaneous pleasures of the street, talking to strangers and performers and whoever else couldn’t get to sleep. The new movie is set in a sunshiny late-afternoon Paris. For long stretches, the couple walk through the labyrinthine Latin Quarter, with its yellowish-gold walls and tiny shops, and then through the winding paths of an elaborate garden nearby. As they move, the camera calmly recedes before them. Linklater’s technique is simple and straightforward yet completely successful as a way of inducing the awkward self-revelation that he wants from his actors. Some of the shots seem to last forever, and the lengthy takes allow us to see the moments of hesitation and retreat and lurching breakthrough: when Jesse and Celine reach boundary lines—should they say what they really feel?—they take a deep breath, pause, and abruptly plunge into candor. The drama of the movie emerges from its form: “Before Sunset” plays out in real time. (It lasts about eighty minutes.) Jesse, now married, with a baby boy, has to decide whether to go to the airport or to stay with Celine, who clearly has never got over him. The movie is an O. Henry-like conceit—the slenderness of the initial premise is part of the charm—but the anecdote becomes almost momentous as it goes on, and the fluidity of Linklater’s technique, which brings the streets, the gardens, the Seine, and the Paris light into Jesse’s decision—all of them working against his obligation to go home—allows the dramatic issue to play out freely. There’s nothing predetermined about what happens. It could go either way.

In the earlier movie, Ethan Hawke had the soft mustache and goatee and flowing hair of a Renaissance poet. After nine years, he’s lost some of his youthful beauty. The hair is clipped; the beard now seems sparse and raffish. Lean and pale, Hawke is only thirty-three, but he’s got the harrowed look of one of those downtown artists who work and drink too much and sleep too little. As Jesse, he doesn’t give a large-scale performance, but he catches a few small things beautifully. Jesse is still boyish, in the American way, wrestling with how much ego to show. He’s proud of his book but self-mocking at the same time, and he speaks haltingly, and then in spasmodic bursts. We can believe him when he says he doesn’t find writing easy.

Julie Delpy has lost something, too—the look of a golden-haired fairy-tale princess which she had in “Sunrise.” Her features no longer have that plush, rounded softness, but, as she has gained in definition and intensity, she’s become even more attractive. Delpy was born in Paris, into a show-business family, and she has made films with Godard and Kieslowski, yet she doesn’t project the intimidating self-sufficiency characteristic of so many French actresses. She has spent a lot of time in New York (she graduated from the N.Y.U. film school in 1996), and she has a partially Americanized sensibility. There’s something tentative and exploratory about her, an eagerness to try out an idea or an attitude, which Linklater tenderly draws on. In both movies, Delpy brings to the deep-dish conversations about life and love a charge of apparent artlessness: she seems to be discovering her emotions as well as her ideas as she goes along, and when she’s abashed by how much she feels she laughs at herself before giving in to emotion once more. From the first moment in the bookstore, Celine is trying to fascinate Jesse all over again, to seduce him with her melancholy, her neurotic difficulties in love. She wants attention from men, she says, but when she gets it she feels like she’s suffocating. What could be a greater come-on to an aesthete like Jesse? The couple are aware that their story is still a fable. “Before Sunrise” and “Before Sunset” are a rare case of two movies that rightfully demand yet another sequel.

As Viktor Navorski, a saintly, jazz-loving bachelor from a tiny Eastern European country, Tom Hanks, the star of Steven Spielberg’s “The Terminal,” speaks only a few words of English and walks in a rapid, side-to-side waddle. When Viktor’s country falls into chaos, his passport is invalidated, and this seemingly hapless man is stuck in a J.F.K. terminal for months—a highly unlikely situation, as it's presented here, propped up with much bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo. Yet we accept it, at first, in a spirit of anticipation. Will Viktor learn to survive? The game is fun for a while. He makes a bed for himself in a lounge, does favors for an airport employee so he can score some food, and carries on a wan flirtation with Amelia (Catherine Zeta-Jones), a masochistic but sweet-natured flight attendant who is touched by his gentlemanly manners. Spielberg directs with his customary fluency: he sends the camera (Janusz Kaminski is the cinematographer) sweeping across an enormous marble-and-glass set filled with high-end stores and consumerist fetishes, and he captures the humming lights and glaring emptiness of the late-night lounges, the exhausting boredom of the functional public place. There's one lovely scene—a fancy dinner that the food-service and maintenance men put on for Viktor and Amelia—that has the delicacy and invention of a classic moment from a Lubitsch farce.

In the end, however, the soft winsomeness of the entire idea gets one down. Great actors enjoy a challenge so much that they sometimes overplay a character like Viktor. Hanks actually brings too much physical detail to the role; the performance is so freighted with verbal quirks and stumbles—clumsiness as a sign of spiritual grace—that it becomes fussy and cloying. Written by Sacha Gervasi and Jeff Nathanson, from a story by Gervasi and Andrew Niccol, "The Terminal" is a tale of goodness that makes too large a demand on our own goodness. Viktor really does very well for himself—unbelievably well. Spielberg may have so positive a view of America that he can't exploit the situation of a trapped man for the desperate nightmare that it really is. What was needed, I think, was more black comedy and fewer kindly jokes and waves of human solidarity. Spielberg sets up an impotent villain, an ambitious customs official, played by Stanley Tucci, whom we're not meant to take seriously, and you can see the filmmakers straining to keep this dummy functioning in the story as an antagonist. When Viktor takes on the official, he becomes a celebrity within the airport, a hero to all the little-guy workers, and the movie turns into an embarrassing Capraesque story of an ordinary man who not only survives but triumphs through common decency. "The Terminal" is highly crafted whimsy; it lacks any compelling reason to exist, and its love story is a dud. Ever bashful when it comes to boy-girl stuff, Spielberg has structured the relationship between Amelia and Viktor to be as asexual as possible. She is hung up on married men, and he is so shy he won't make a pass. Even in the desolation of an airport lounge at midnight, Viktor is too pure, we realize, to entertain the ghost of a dirty thought. ♦

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC., PUBLISHED THROUGH ITS DIVISION THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. COPYRIGHT ©2004 THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Volume LXXX, No. 18, July 5, 2004. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for six combined issues: February 16 & 23, April 19 & 26, June 14 & 21, July 12 & 19, August 9 & 16, and December 20 & 27) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. David Carey, vice-president and publisher; William Li, associate publisher; Ronda Carnegie, advertising director; Gail Day, advertising director; Marie Wolpert, advertising director; Jamie Engel, sales development manager; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; Bob Gruters, marketing services director; Theresa Gaffney, creative development director; Rosemary Stanton, advertising business director; Edward Klaris, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, vice-chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.E.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.O.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 1632, Station A, Windsor, ON N9A7C9.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684; call (800) 825-2510; or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Four weeks are required for change of address. Please give both new and old address as printed on most recent label. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks of receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Gail Day or Marie Wolpert at (212) 286-5611. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For Permissions and Reprint requests, please call (212) 286-8349 or fax requests to (212) 286-8628. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online: www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines on the World Wide Web, visit www.condenet.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING. MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, AND OTHER MATERIALS SUBMITTED MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

ADVERTISEMENT

Presenting the 3rd Annual

A MOVEABLE FEAST

JOIN US FOR A FOOD AND WINE
EVENT CELEBRATING
THE NEW YORKER'S FOOD ISSUE
ENJOY CULINARY CREATIONS
FROM THE CITY'S TOP CHEFS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2004

Chelsea Art Museum
556 West 22nd Street
New York City

VIP ADMISSION
6-9 P.M. Ticket $150
Includes a one hour preview tasting

GENERAL ADMISSION
7-9 P.M. Ticket $100

Tickets go on sale August 1, 2004.
To purchase tickets:

www.ticketweb.com
TICKETWEB
866.468.3399

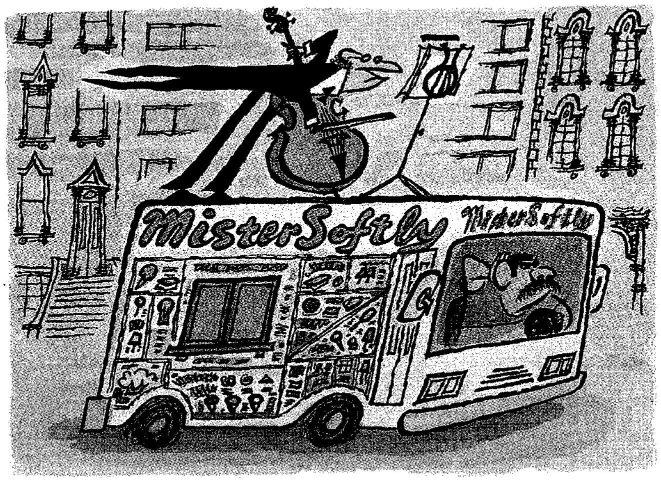
SPONSORED BY

Crate&Barrel

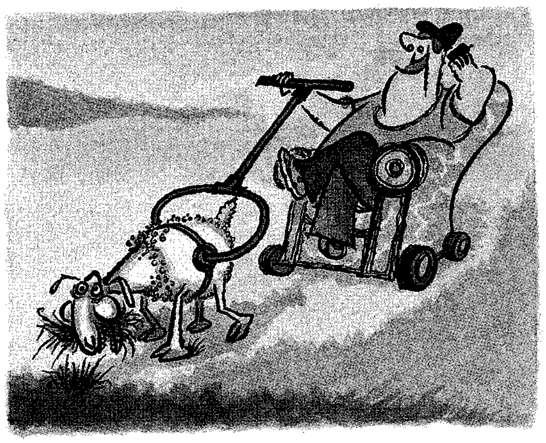
The net proceeds of your donation will go to
The James Beard Foundation. A letter of receipt will
be provided for tax purposes.

NOISE POLLUTION & DIN CONTROL BY ARNOLD ROTH

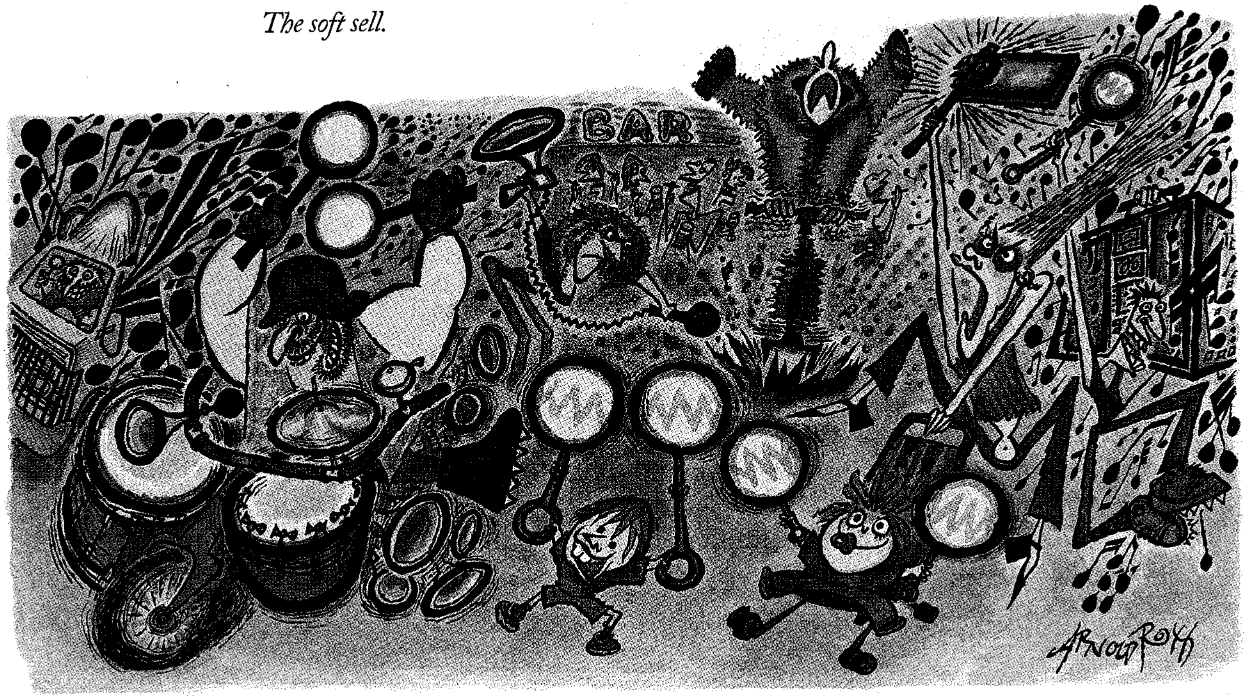
In an ambitious effort to bring succor to New Yorkers tortured by jackhammers, pounding music and the incessant jingles of ice cream trucks, the Bloomberg administration plans to overhaul the city's noise code for the first time in more than three decades. —*The Times.*


MisterSoftly
MisterSoftly

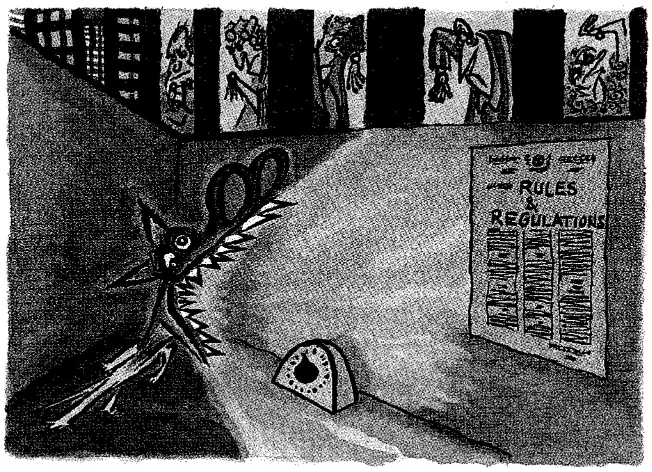
The soft sell.



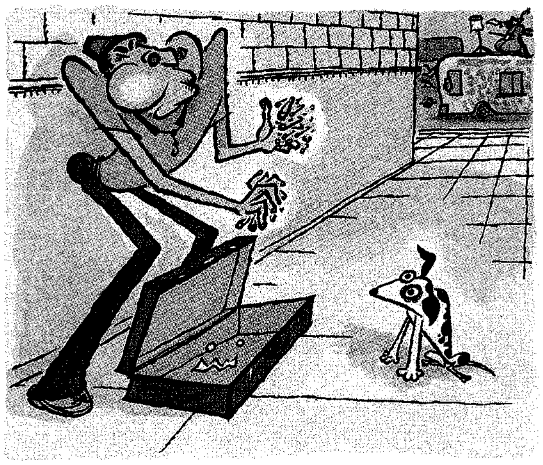
The sounds of sort-of-silence.



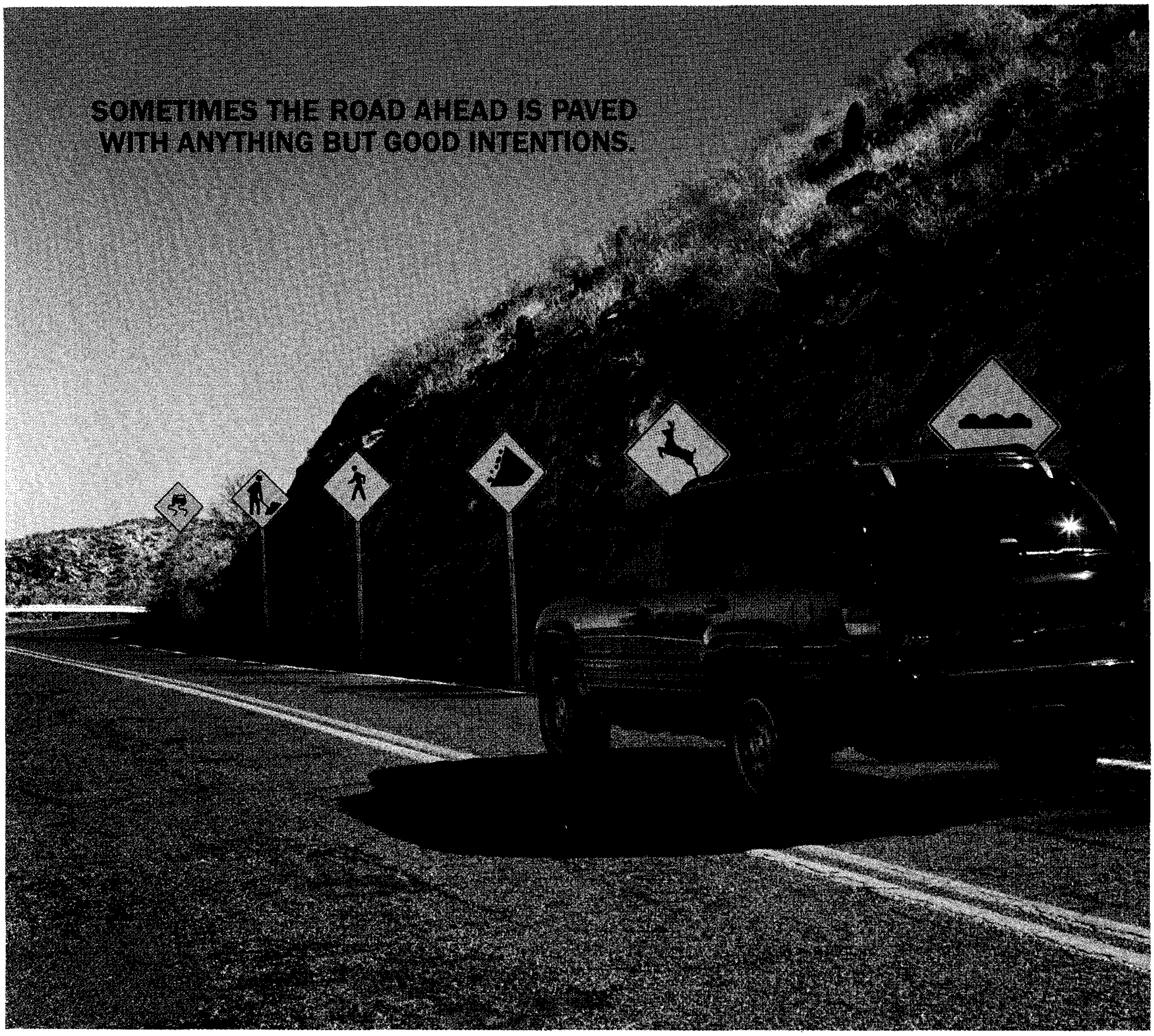
The dissident National Rattle Association.


RULES
&
REGULATIONS

Limited barking.



Pollution solution: air sax.


SOMETIMES THE ROAD AHEAD IS PAVED
WITH ANYTHING BUT GOOD INTENTIONS.

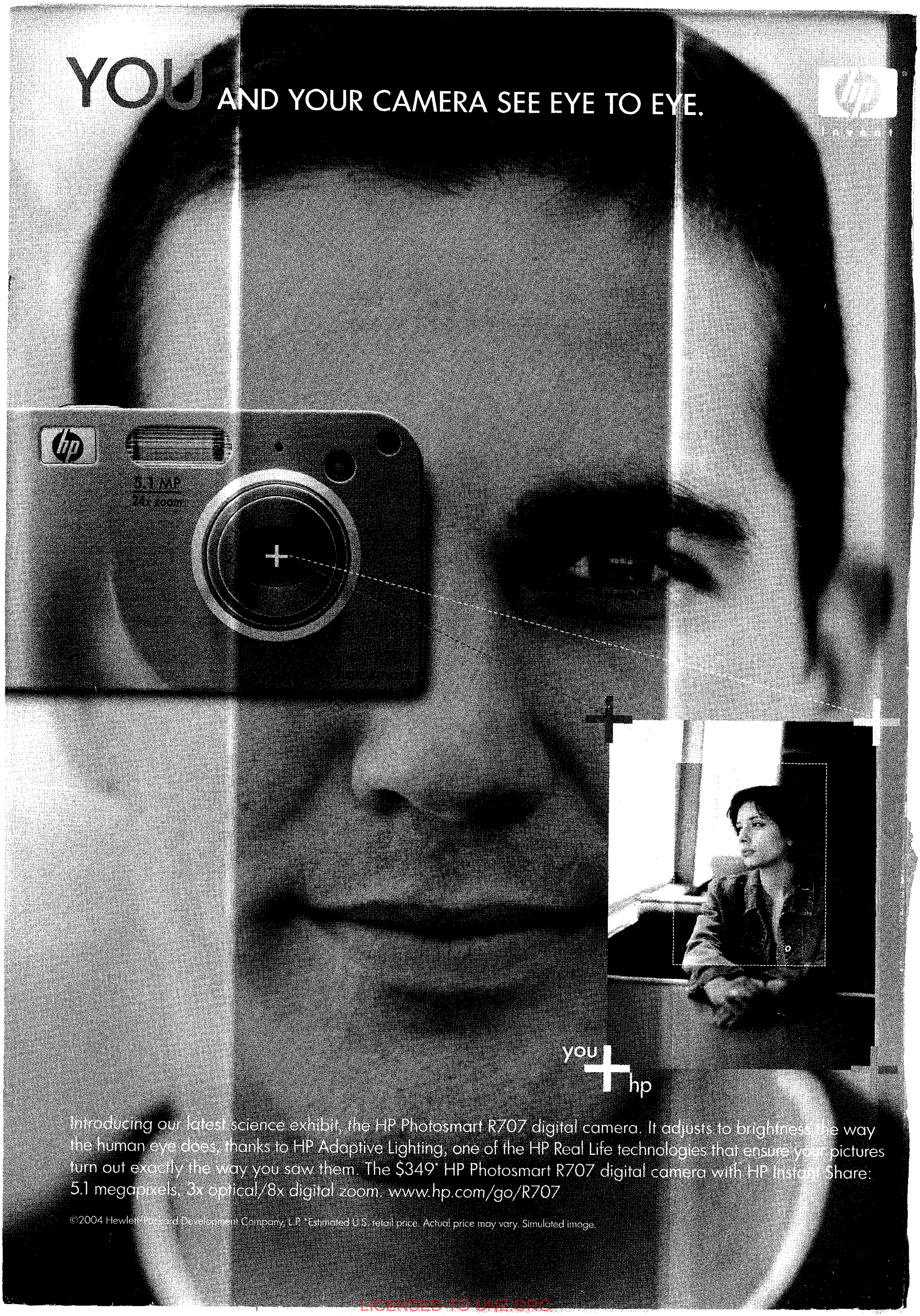
Traction
Articulation
Ground Clearance
Maneuverability
Water Fording

TRAIL RATED 4x4

THE TRAIL RATED™ JEEP® GRAND CHEROKEE. You don't have to be on the Rubicon Trail to experience the rugged outdoors – sometimes it's waiting around the next bend in the road. That's why we created the TRAIL RATED system – a series of grueling tests in five categories that make sure our 4x4s can tackle the most treacherous terrains on earth. Even those hazardous ones called "roads." Learn about the Trail Rated Jeep Grand Cherokee and its impressive 7-year/70,000-mile Powertrain Limited Warranty* at jeep.com/trailrated **TRAIL RATED CAPABILITY. ONLY IN A JEEP 4x4.**

ONLY IN A
Jeep
JEEP.COM

Jeep and Trail Rated are trademarks of DaimlerChrysler Corporation.
*See dealer for a copy of this limited warranty. Transferable to second owner with fee. A deductible applies.



YOU AND YOUR CAMERA SEE EYE TO EYE.
hp
invent
hp
5.1 MP
24x zoom
you + hp

Introducing our latest science exhibit, the HP Photosmart R707 digital camera. It adjusts to brightness the way the human eye does, thanks to HP Adaptive Lighting, one of the HP Real Life technologies that ensure your pictures turn out exactly the way you saw them. The $349* HP Photosmart R707 digital camera with HP Instant Share: 5.1 megapixels, 3x optical/8x digital zoom. www.hp.com/go/R707

©2004 Hewlett-Packard Development Company, L.P. *Estimated U.S. retail price. Actual price may vary. Simulated image.